

PLUCK AND DUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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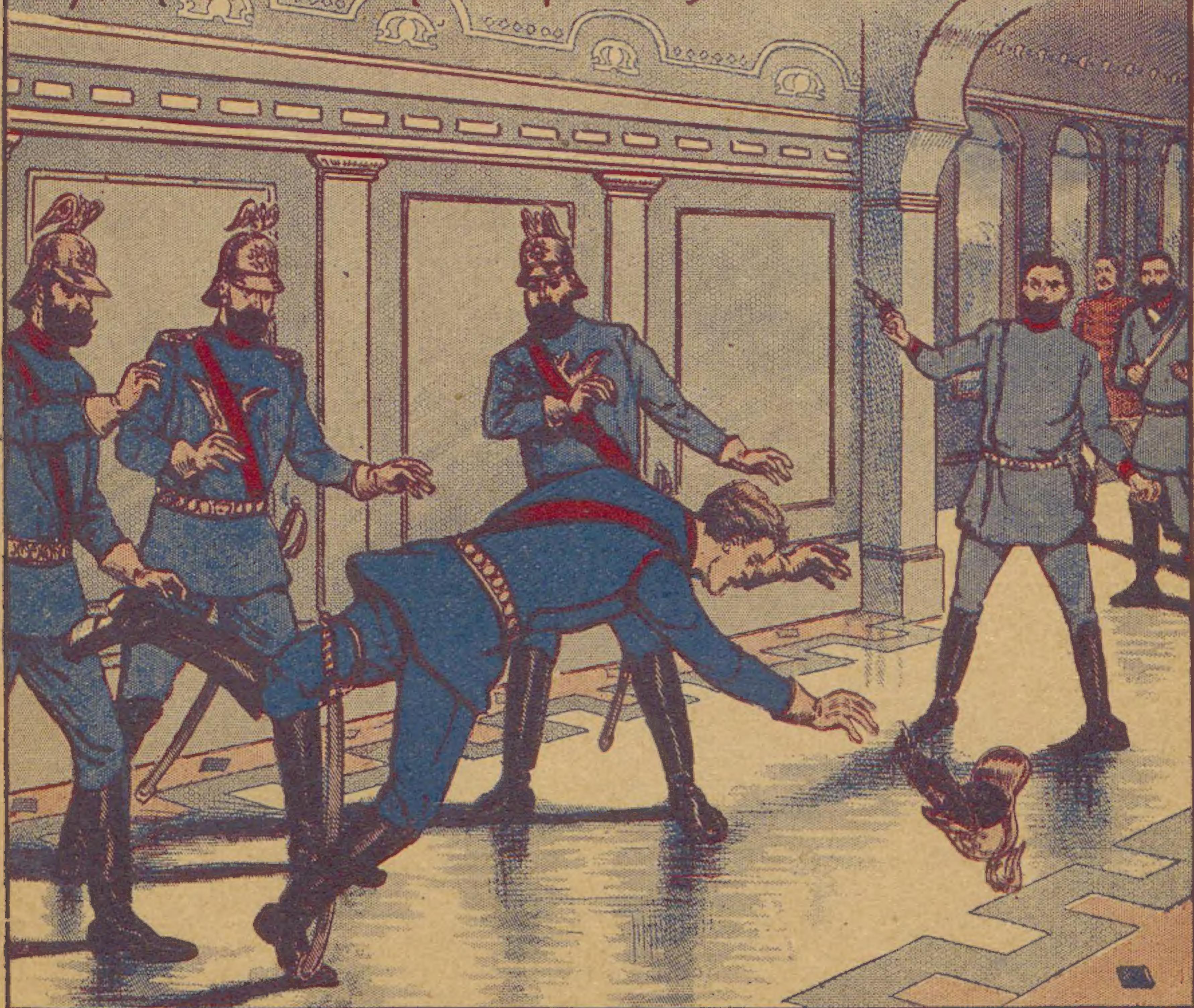
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NEW YORK, JULY 6, 1921.

Price 7 Cents

THE BLUE MASK; OR, FIGHTING AGAINST THE CZAR. By ALLAN ARNOLD. (A THRILLING STORY OF RUSSIA.)

AND OTHER STORIES.



The rattle of the helmet on the polished marble floor caused him to turn quickly. He took in the whole incident in a moment. "Help! Help!" he cried in a loud voice, at the same time drawing a revolver.

PLUCK AND LUCK

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THE BLUE MASK OR, FIGHTING AGAINST THE CZAR

By ALLEN ARNOLD

CHAPTER I.—The Mysterious Brotherhood at the Lonely Cottage.

Not far from Moscow, the ancient capital of Russia, stands a little cottage old and grimy with age, and half in ruins. Between it and the half Asiatic city are immense market gardens. Beyond it there are vast uncultivated plains. The cottage stands alone. That is to say, there are no other dwelling houses near it. But it is not the only building which breaks the monotony of the great level sweep of country. Not far from it is a vast building, looking like a fortress, and apparently able to stand a siege. It is not a fortress. It is a prison. And one of the most dreaded prisons in Russia is this place. Most of the prisoners confined in it are there for political offenses. There are men and women, who, at the risk of their lives, have been fighting to free their country from an iron despotism. So much for the cottage and its surroundings. On the night of December —, 18 —, from without, not a glimmer of light could be seen in the small house we have been describing. Yet inside all was activity. But not in the cottage itself.

It was beneath the cottage, and beneath the round that surrounded it that there was such a stir. Above, but one man could be seen sitting motionless inside the door. What he was like it is impossible to say, for his face was concealed by black mask, which completely hid his features. His figure seemed to indicate that he was still young. Below, lights were burning. Dark forms were flitting to and fro amid the glare of the lanterns. Like the man above, the men wore heavy black masks. Thus they were all completely disguised. Roundabout were strewn tools and implements of various kinds. Wires could be seen traversing the side of the passage in which the mysterious masked men were. It was a horrible hole. But these men cared nothing for suffering and privation. They were heroes. At length they ceased to move about. They seated themselves on the heaps of dirt which lay around.

"Brethren of the Mask," said a strong, clear voice, "at last 'tis done."

"'Tis done," they echoed.

For a moment there was silence. Then the first speaker broke it again.

"Two months' work," he cried, "two months of suffering!"

"Yes, Feodor," said another man, "but we shall be repaid for all our labors. To-night she will be free."

"Free!" cried a young voice, enthusiastically, "free to continue her glorious work for our beloved country."

Enough has been said to give the reader a knowledge of the aims of these masked men. They were Nihilists. Men who were prepared for the sake of the happiness of others to lead a life of suffering and to die a martyr's death. What wonder we call them heroes.

"'Tis late; he should be here," said Feodor.

"I hope nothing has happened to him."

"Have no fear for Paul. He will not fail us, Serge."

"But in this life the least delay, the slightest departure from the prearranged order of things causes suspicion. Never were the agents of the Third Section more active. If he falls into their hands he is lost."

"Lost! yes, and with him the cause."

"Listen," said Feodor, raising his hand for silence.

"What is it?"

The noise they heard was above. The statuesque figure sitting near the door of the cottage showed signs of life. He was speaking.

"Who comes?" he said in deep sepulchral tones, to someone without.

"A mask," was the reply.

"For what?" continued the doorkeeper.

"For land and liberty!"

"You are welcome. Enter!"

The door was opened. From the darkness a tall form appeared, but in the gloom of the room it was not easy to see what he was like. Instantly behind him closed the door. Without a moment's delay the newcomer opened a bureau which stood in front of him. It was a counterfeit only, for he stepped through and hurried down a flight of steps cut in the earth. All the black masks rose from their seats.

"Thank Heaven, Paul!" cried one.

"God be praised for sending thee!"

Every man poured forth his feelings of delight at seeing the new arrival.

"Thanks, friends!" he cried, pressing their hands.

Now under the light some idea could be formed of the man. He was tall and well made; his form seemed lithe and sinewy; his hands were small and white as a woman's. What his face was like cannot be said, for, like the others, he wore a mask.

But there was a difference between him and all

THE BLUE MASK

the men who were grouped around him. Each man wore a mask of black over his face. Paul wore a mask of bright blue. At all their meetings these determined men appeared masked. The agents of the police of the Third Section, as it is called in Russia, were everywhere. It was impossible to be too cautious. Infinite pains were taken to prevent the intrusion of a traitor in their midst. But in case he should come there the mask was a powerful protection against discovery.

"And how are our good friends in St. Petersburg?"

"Well," replied the Blue Mask, "and anxious to hear from you. I have come direct from the capital. Is the work finished, Feodor?"

"It is."

"That is good. You have done well, brethren, but it has been a great task. For her and in the name of the cause," he said, raising himself proudly and speaking in a ringing voice, "I thank you. To-night Marie Valerian will be at liberty."

"And to think, Paul," said Serge Nikitin, "that a young girl should be imprisoned—ay, should lose her life for preaching liberty to the people."

"Say no more, Serge. The hour is at hand when a blow will be struck that will reach from one end of this vast empire to the other. It will terrify the imperial autocrat in his palace."

"It will—it will!" echoed the black masks.

"How I long for the hour to come!" cried Ivan Zouroff. "What time is it?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"When do we act?" cried Feodor.

These men, although they had been working for two months, were in ignorance of much of the plan of operation. The Blue Mask alone knew all.

"At early morning," he said, "I will give the signal."

"I shall be ready to act," said Feodor. "Do you see this wire?" he added.

"Yes. What of it?"

"It traverses this passage for three hundred yards, going beneath the fortress. One touch on the lever and the mine will explode."

"It is terrible—terrible," cried Paul, pressing his hands to his head as if to shut out his thoughts.

"But there is no other way. Marie knows all; she will be ready to act the instant the sound is heard."

"You have information?"

"Yes. Nicholas Karanzin, one of the brethren, managed to obtain a place as warden in the prison. He works everything inside."

"And there is no danger to Marie?"

"None. The explosion will not affect the portion of the prison in which she is confined. The walls will be demolished. Then, aided by Nicholas, she will fly. Everything is ready outside to convey her to a place of safety. Brethren, we cannot fail."

"Let us drink to the success of our scheme," cried Ivan.

"By all means," replied Paul. "If you have any vodka. For the night is cold."

Each man filled his glass with the spirit, which like white brandy in appearance, burned like fire.

"Brethren of the mask," cried Paul, "drain your glasses. To Marie Valerian. For land and

liberty. To Marie Valerian, and for land and liberty!" was the cry, as they tossed down the fiery liquid.

Then they heard footsteps coming toward them.

"What is it?" demanded the Blue Mask.

"The doorkeeper."

"But he is not to leave his post except on account of grave peril."

"That is so," answered Feodor.

"Then there is danger abroad."

"It must be."

With hearts throbbing with anxiety, these men living in the shadow of death, waited for the doorkeeper to speak. He sprang into their midst. Then above his head he raised his hand.

"Brethren!" he cried, in a voice stifled with emotion, "the house is surrounded. We are lost! we are lost!"

The masked men uttered a cry of despair.

CHAPTER II.—A Terrible Event.

For an instant all was still. The Blue Mask held up his hand to command silence. It was possible the doorkeeper might have made a mistake. Or even if he had not the visit might prove to be merely one of those calls which the agents of the Third Section made from time to time. Against such a visit every precaution had been taken. The police if they entered this cottage would find nothing to cause suspicion. They would see no one.

"Heaven hope it may be so," said Paul to himself.

Then all at once loud knocking was heard at the door.

"Open, in the name of the Czar!" cried a voice in such tones that the men in the underground passage could hear it.

"What shall we do?" asked Feodor, hastily.

"Ivan had better admit our visitors," replied Serge. "They will think he's a market gardener. Everything's arranged, and after glancing around they will go!"

"Yes, yes, that will save everything," said Ivan.

The heroic young man had no fears on his own account. He was ready to do what his comrades thought best, even if it cost him his life. Then there was a loud crash.

"My God!" cried Paul, "they're inside."

It was true. The men who surrounded the house had become impatient. So they forced an entrance. The Brethren of the Mask could hear their heavy tread on the floor above.

"Still we're safe," said Feodor, "for no one knows the way down here. Keep quiet and all will yet be well."

Scarcely had he spoken when above their heads a door opened. The men grasped each other's hands. The crisis had arrived.

"Great Heaven! this is terrible," shouted Serge Nikitin, "there is treachery here."

"We will stay and fight to the last."

"Yes, death is preferable to a prison."

The men drew their pistols and daggers. Not a face could be seen, but the actions and tones of the masked men were eloquent.

"Brethren!" cried the Blue Mask, hurriedly,

"this must not be. It is useless sacrificing our lives in a vain attempt to repel the attack. We can yet escape, for there is a way out through the tunnel to the north."

"I know," said Feodor. "But to go means to give up all the fruits of our labor."

"Feodor, the cause demands that we should live. God knows, my friend, when the hour comes for me to yield my life for it, I shall be ready."

The commanding tones of the heroic young man left no room for discussion. Rapidly the passage emptied. Most of the lights had been extinguished. Into this gloomy place crowded the emissaries of the Third Section. They were all armed to the teeth. They had with them a detachment of soldiers.

"Peter Lisogub was right," said a tall, villainous-looking man, who seemed to act as leader, "this is a great find."

"Yes, general," said a fat, coarse-looking man with a thick, brown beard who stood by his side, "but where are they?"

"The conspirators?"

"Yes."

"Gone," laughed the man addressed as general, "but not far. No, no, captain, they'll walk right into the arms of my men. Ha. ha, ha! Peter Lisogub must be rewarded."

No sooner had he spoken than suddenly in the gloom they saw a dark form.

"It's one of them!" cried a gendarme. "See, he's masked."

"Shoot him!" shouted another man.

"Peace!" roared the general, in a harsh voice. "Leave me to deal with this matter. Now, fellow, you had better surrender."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the man, in scornful accents.

The general was mad with passion. But he restrained himself, for he was anxious to capture the Nihilist alive.

"Surrender, or I'll have you shot down like a dog!"

"I know you, General Baranoff," was the defiant answer. "Well for you if your life was not in danger, too. Make your peace with God, tyrant, for you are about to die. I swear it!"

In deep sepulchral accents the man spoke. The words and the tone appalled the hearers. All but General Baranoff. He lost all control over himself.

"Shoot the hound!" he hissed through his teeth.

A dozen weapons were raised. As quick as lightning the man moved. All the time unseen by his foes, his hands had been grasping two levers. Crack! Crack! Crack! A dozen rifles rang out.

"For land and liberty! Death to the Czar!" cried the masked man.

At the same instant he pulled the two levers which he had been grasping. There was a crash which shook the earth itself. In a second not a vestige of the cottage remained. Nitro-glycerine, the terrible agent of death which the Nihilists employed, had done its work. Out of all Gen. Baranoff's force not one remained. They were crushed and mangled beyond recognition. When his comrades withdrew the heroic young man who had caused the explosion, unseen by them, had remained behind. At the sacrifice of his life he

had sent scores of the enemies of freedom to their deaths. For it was not alone here that destruction had taken place. The mine under the immense fortress was all ready to be fired. The same hand had achieved both ends. With a roar like thunder the gigantic prison had been rent almost in two. Half of it seemed to soar up to Heaven. The governor of the prison, the chief officials and a hundred soldiers had met their deaths. The little band of heroes who were rushing along the secret passage heard the sounds. Instantly they all stopped. Every man knew what it meant. The mine had been fired.

"They have set in motion the engine we built," said Feodor.

The Blue Mask looked hastily around and counted his companions. One was missing. He knew what this meant.

"No, no, Feodor, you're wrong. See you, one of our friends is not here. God help his soul—it is he has done this deed!"

Silently, but full of admiration for their heroic comrade, this masked band of fearless men resumed its journey.

"We'll have to be careful, Paul."

"Why?"

"The entrance may be guarded."

"That cannot be. Who knows of it but ourselves, and we've never used it except at dead of night when there has been no one near."

"But there's a traitor among us," said Feodor. "You forget that."

"I cannot believe it."

"Nevertheless it is true. Listen."

The masked men stopped. They had come to the steps that led up to the entrance to the secret passage.

"My God, you are right, Feodor! There are people outside."

"Then," cried Serge Nitkin, "we must remain where we are! To leave is death!"

"We cannot stay," said Paul, in solemn accents. "More than ever Marie Valerian will need our services now. To remain is to be captured or killed, if not to-night then to-morrow. No, no, my brethren, we must fight these men and force our way out."

The entrance was concealed on the outside by three or four bushes. The masked men had opened the door without being heard. Then in a body they rushed out. As they did so a crowd of men who seemed to spring out of the earth dashed toward them.

"You are my prisoners!" cried a loud voice. "Surrender!"

Bang—bang—bang! The masked men made no reply. They fired at their assailants and tried to force their way through the throng. Pistol and dagger in hand, the Brethren of the Mask fought desperately. Panic-stricken by the fury of the attack and appalled by the frightful explosions which had just taken place, the men of the Third Section seemed unable to offer much resistance. In the darkness the masked men became separated. Paul was making his way along when suddenly he found himself confronted by a sturdy figure. The eyes of the two men met. The Blue Mask recoiled.

"Peter Lisogub!" he cried, aghast. "A spy!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the villain. "My time has come! I shall kill you!"

Bang! The spy fired. Madly Paul leaped forward, dagger in hand. Into the breast of the traitor he plunged the steel.

"Die!" he cried, as the man fell.

Uninjured by the bullet of his foe he darted away.

"After him! after him!" cried the spy, faintly. "It's the Blue Mask!"

Several men went on his track, resolyed to kill him.

CHAPTER III.—Paul Lieven and His Friends Visit the Czar.

Two nights after these startling occurrences a party of men were seated in a large room. It was an apartment belonging to a house that stood on the outskirts of St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia. The men were attired in much the same manner as those we have previously described. That is to say, they were all masked and they all wore black masks. They belonged to the same secret society. They were all Brethren of the Mask, but not one of them has been introduced to the reader before. The room appeared to be full of people. Upon the rough wooden table there were several bottles of beer, a dish of bacon, and another of salt fish. It was one of those little banquets which the Nihilists were in the habit of holding from time to time to relieve the tension in which they lived. Everyone seemed merry. Although the sword of death might be said to be suspended above their heads, they seemed not to be affected by it.

"By this time Marie Valerian is free!" cried a young man.

"Yes, Vladimir Orloff!" replied another man. "Thanks to the bravery of Paul Lieven and our brethren who are with him."

"She should have joined us by now."

"At any moment she may arrive."

"This cursed Government owns the telegraph wires and muzzles the Press, or we should have had news from Moscow."

"True, true, what an unhappy country it is. But who comes—maybe it is them."

The shouts of laughter in which the party were indulging all stopped. Instantly everyone was full of expectancy. They were doomed to disappointment. For one man entered the room. All knew him, for he was the famous Blue Mask. It was Paul Lieven.

"Brethren!" he cried, "how is this?"

"What?" was the cry.

"You are all masked! Why so? Are you not aware that we dispense with this disguise at our banquets?"

"It is so," said Vladimir; "but since yesterday the police have been more active than usual. There are spies everywhere."

Paul Lieven put his hand to his head.

"Our hour has not yet come," he said, quietly. "For the present we can defy them. Unmask."

Saying this, he took his bright blue mask from his face. The Brethren of the Mask did the same. Then all eyes were turned on Paul. They saw how deathly pale his handsome face was. The black eyes shone like diamonds. His waving

black hair, his small black mustache seemed to enhance the pallor of his countenance. In form and face Paul Lieven was an Adonis. Born of a princely family, he had sacrificed rank, wealth, everything that most men care for in this world, to fight for the cause of the people. What wonder that his associates adored him.

"What is it, Paul?" cried Vladimir. "You have news. Is it not so?"

"It is," he answered sadly.

"Speak! Let us hear it whatever it may be!"

"The attempt to free Marie Valerian has failed!"

"Failed!"

The men sprang to their feet. They became livid.

"Yes, failed. On the night on which the mine was to be fired—two nights ago—the police surrounded the cottage. They were in overwhelming numbers. It was impossible to fight them. All fled by the secret passage."

"Then there was no explosion! All the work of two months wasted!" cried a man, bitterly.

"There was an explosion. Half the prison, as I have since heard, was demolished. More than a hundred men were killed."

"What became of the police in the cottage?"

"Killed! All killed, not one escaped. Among our enemies who were slain was General Baranoff."

"Who did this?" said Vladimir, in his deep voice.

"Semetrius Ossinsky. He went to his death like a martyr."

A profound silence followed this remark. The men grasped each other's hands. They were paying a silent tribute to their dead comrade.

"Friends," said Paul, speaking again, "we pray for the dead, but we must think of the living. Marie is in greater danger than ever. The Czar has determined to strike a blow which shall inspire terror. The affair at Moscow has caused a panic at court. To satisfy his imperial majesty torrents of blood must flow. Among the victims is Marie Valerian."

Then, speaking in a voice that showed how deeply he was affected, he added:

"She dies at twelve o'clock to-morrow."

The men who heard him were panic-stricken.

"How know you this?" cried one. "Can it be true?"

"It is true," said Paul Lieven. "One of my friends at the palace has told me so only an hour ago. You'll admit that my information is correct as a rule."

"Certainly, my dear Paul," said Vladimir, "but this is terrible news. Marie is to die to-morrow and at Moscow! She cannot be saved."

"Marie is not at Moscow," answered Paul Lieven. "She has been moved and is within twenty miles of the capital."

"Can we get her from the jail?"

"No, it is too late. We could not arrange matters in so short a time."

"Then she will die."

"Not so. I have a plan which will insure her life. We must compel the Czar to sign her pardon."

"Are you mad?" cried Vladimir, in amazement. "Compel the Czar to sign her pardon. How can

this be done? The tyrant is hedged round with guards to such an extent that to get through them is impossible."

"You're wrong, Vladimir. Listen. The hour has come to make use of our friends in the palace. This I have arranged. You're aware that some of the imperial bodyguard is well-disposed toward us."

"Yes."

"Well, four of these men guard the depot night and day to prevent his enemies approaching. Alexander III is at the Annitchkoff Palace. To-morrow morning we must be there."

"To-morrow morning!"

"Yes, not before. At that time four of our friends will be on guard. We must take their places. I shall have the pardon ready for the Emperor. He will sign it when we hold a pistol at his head. Then Marie is saved."

Desperate though the plan was, yet these men resolved to adopt it. There was not a dissentient voice. Three men were selected by lot to join Paul in this terrible undertaking.

"Now, we must be off," said Paul Lieven. "Meet me at the old house on Sorokhovaia street. There you'll find dresses. Be not late, for we must enter the palace to-night."

As the clock was striking twelve, four men, dressed in the splendid uniform of the Imperial Guard, with high boots and huge metal helmets, surmounted by the imperial eagle, stopped outside a small gate at the rear of the palace. One man gave a low whistle. Instantly the door was opened. Slowly they walked in.

"This way," said the mysterious person, who had admitted them. "I will take you to the guard-room. Then I can do no more."

The hearts of the four men beat high, for they were engaged in a very perilous enterprise. In a few moments they might be discovered. Who could tell? The door of the guardroom was opened when they knocked. Four men, dressed as the four men who have been described, came out. They were silent friends of the Nihilist cause.

"Wait for the captain until morning. We can do no more."

Then Paul Lieven and his fellow conspirators found themselves alone in the guardroom of the imperial palace. Next morning, as has been said, the captain arrived. Well coached in their business, the men received him in true military style. He looked at them without having the least suspicion of the fraud which had been perpetrated. Then, with the officer walking by their side, the four Brethren of the Mask set out for the room of the Czar of all the Russias. At every few yards they passed sentinels and attendants, but attracted no notice. Now they arrived at the anteroom of the private apartments. The page of the Czar opened the door. The four men walked in. The captain stationed them at their posts. Then, with the four soldiers who had been on guard during the night, the officer departed. The relief of the guard had been accomplished. So far all went well. Then the heavy curtains at one end of the room were pushed aside by the page. His majesty the Czar, having the Czarina on his arm, entered. Both seated themselves at table. They were about to take breakfast. The table was elegantly decorated. Immense dishes

and ornaments of solid gold abounded. The breakfast was served.

"Leave us," said Alexander to the attendant. "No, not you, Michael. You must remain."

The attendant who had served the breakfast withdrew. There were now in the room the Czar, the Czarina, the page, and the four guards. Paul Lieven felt that this was the time to act. He gave a signal imperceptible to all but the Brethren of the Mask. Instantly the four men sprang forward. One stationed himself at the door. Another dashed toward the page. The third hurried to the side of the Czarina. Paul Lieven himself held a pistol at the head of the Czar.

CHAPTER IV.—How Paul Lieven Treated the Czar of Russia.

"Ha! Treason!" shouted Alexander.

At the same time he half rose from his chair. Paul put his hand on the shoulder of the imperial autocrat and pressed him back into his seat.

"Don't move," he said, in a clear but low voice.

The Emperor looked at his audacious subject with eyes that endeavored to pierce through the disguise he had assumed. The Czarina was pale with terror.

"Fear not, your majesty," said Feodor, addressing her, "we war not with women. We leave that work to the Czar of all the Russias," he added with rage.

But prudence restrained him from showing his feelings. He realized that he was in the power of these daring men, and that if he attempted to resist their will nothing but a miracle could save him from their vengeance.

"What means this outrage?" he said, sternly, speaking to Paul Lieven, "who are you?"

"It matters not who I am," replied the Blue Mask, "though I come from a family as noble as your own."

"You a noble and in arms against your sovereign!" cried the Czar.

"Yes, it is so. The wrongs of my country have forced me to engage in this struggle. But I am not here to talk of myself or the cause I represent. My business is to demand—"

"Demand!" exclaimed the Czar.

"Yes, demand!" hissed Paul through his clenched teeth. "With all your legions you are now helpless in my hands. I am here to demand the pardon of Marie Valerian, who is to die to-morrow."

"It is impossible!"

"Impossible?"

"Yes; this woman is the idol of my enemies. I refuse."

"Very well," said Paul Lieven, quietly. "You wish me to resort to extremities. True as the Heaven above us, tyrant, you shall precede her. If she is to die, you will go before, for I will kill you!"

The Czar's face blanched. But it was not with terror. He was a man of iron will and courage. The pallor of his face was due to the emotions that possessed him. It was almost as bad as death to this proud man to be ordered to do anything. Never in his life had he been so humiliat-

ed. Paul Lieven drew a paper from his pocket. It was the pardon of Marie Valerian properly drawn up on State paper. This had been obtained without difficulty. The Nihilists had powerful, though silent supporters in every department of the government. Nothing remained but for the Czar to affix his signature. In front of the Czar the paper was placed. Paul had neglected nothing. He drew forth a pen and ink.

"Sign!" he said, harshly.

The Czar hesitated.

"Time is precious!" cried the Blue Mask. "I insist on it being done!"

Recognizing the presence of the Czarina, the young Nihilist subdued his language. But his looks and actions left no room for doubt. He stood with a pistol at the head of the Czar, and in the other hand he grasped a keen stiletto. Alexander realized his frightful peril. Rapidly he reviewed in his mind the situation, but he could see no escape. One instant he hesitated. Then he took the pen in his hand and firmly wrote the imperial name, "Alexander."

It was now complete. But this was not enough to satisfy the Blue Mask. He threw four pieces of paper on the table.

"Sign these!" he cried. "They are safe conducts for myself and my companions."

Again the Czar signed his name. Everything was completed. But the most difficult task remained. That was to get out of the palace. Paul Lieven felt no doubt but that the safe conducts would get them through with comparative ease. But a sudden thought struck him. It was that the Czar might send a messenger and command the pardon of Marie Valerian. What was to be done? Hastily he formed a resolve.

"Swear," he said to the Czar, "that you will say nothing of what has happened to any one for one hour."

"There is no need to swear," replied the Czar. "I pledge my word, and the word of a Romanoff is as good as the most sacred oath."

"Very well. I believe you."

Paul Lieven turned to his companions.

"Come," he said.

Then, walking across the room, he halted when he came to the page.

"Young man," he said sternly, "you see what class of men you have to deal with. We fear nothing—we stop at nothing. Do not stir from this room or give an alarm until we have had time to quit the palace. If you do, not all the protection of His Majesty the Czar shall save you from death."

"My word includes all in this room," said Alexander proudly.

The four Nihilists, in spite of the hatred they felt for the tyrant, almost admired him at this moment.

"Come, Feodor, we must go."

Then the four young men passed forth into the wide corridor that was outside the private apartments of the emperor. Down the great staircase they went into the high and vaulted hall. It was full of people. Ministers and generals and courtiers jostled against each other. Scattered thickly among them in all directions were agents of the Third Section, for no one was free from suspicion. Alexander saw a secret foe in every man who approached him.

Paul and his companions were aware of this. They knew that the least suspicious act might betray them. It was possible that the safeguard of the Czar might be insufficient to protect them. But they strolled along carelessly, chatting as they went. It was a very common sight to see the bodyguard of the emperor in this part of the palace, so no one appeared to bestow more than ordinary attention upon them.

The throng was great, but they managed to elbow their way through it. Rapidly they were drawing near to the guardroom. Once there, they felt themselves safe. For they would be able to make their exit from the palace in the same way they had entered. An accident happened, however, at this juncture which was most alarming. Feodor stumbled. It is not easy for a civilian to walk with ease and freedom when dressed in a military garb. The long sword dragging on the ground got between his legs. In an instant he had fallen heavily on his face.

Paul Lieven and his two friends laughed heartily at this incident. But their laughter was turned to dismay when they saw that the huge helmet Feodor was wearing had dropped from his head, carrying with it the heavy black beard he had assumed. Instantly the smooth and refined features of the young man were disclosed. Standing near was a man in the costume of a court functionary. He was an agent of the Third Section. The rattle of the helmet on the polished marble floor caused him to turn quickly. He took in the whole incident in a moment.

"Help! Help!" he cried, in a loud voice, at the same time drawing a revolver from his pocket. "There are traitors in the palace."

Instantly there was an indescribable commotion. The group of ministers and generals scattered as if by magic. The soldiers drew their swords and dashed over toward the spot from whence the cries had come. Bang! bang! Twice the police agent fired. Each time he aimed at Feodor, who was rising from the ground.

"For your lives, run!" cried Feodor. "It's your only chance!"

"For her life!" exclaimed Paul solemnly.

He meant the life of Marie Valerian. There was no time to think. The four men with a crowd of armed servants of the Czar at their heels dashed out into the garden of the palace. It was by this way they had entered. Could they make their exit in the same manner? All depended on whether the faithful friend of the cause who had admitted them had taken the precaution to leave the door unfastened for their departure. They were within a few yards of the small gate, when their pursuers emerged from the passage that ran alongside the guardroom.

Bang! Bang! Past them flew a shower of leaden missiles which did not touch them. With beating heart, Paul Lieven, who was in advance, put his hand on the latch of the gate. One moment would decide all. Then, with a feeling of triumph, he found that the door was not locked. Through it the four men passed, closing it behind them.

The Nihilists succeeded in escaping from the palace before their enemies could overtake them. They went to the house of a friend of the cause, where they adopted clever disguises before proceeding farther. But Paul Lieven went out alone,

engaged a carriage, and drove toward the prison. As he drew near a procession headed by the governor drew near. It was proceeding to the place where executions were held. In it Paul recognized Marie Valerian. Paul dismounted from the carriage and approached the governor with the order for Marie's release in his hand. He gave it to that official, who read it, and then turned to those following, saying:

"It is an order from His Majesty the Czar to release Marie Valerian from custody. Girl, you are free," he said to the maiden.

Paul approached Marie and taking her hand led her to the carriage and the vehicle dashed away. Then for the first time she recognized Paul, her lover. She knew it was he who had saved her life.

CHAPTER V.—Peter Lisogub Reappears.

Some time after these incidents, in a small inn situated in a lonely district about fifty miles from St. Petersburg, two men were sitting. Both men were drinking vodka. The weather was extremely cold, and they took it to warm themselves prior to starting on a journey.

"And where are you bound, comrade?" said the younger of the two men. "I am going toward Smolensko."

"My way lies in a contrary direction," said the other, in a rough voice, as he took his short wooden pipe from his mouth.

"I am sorry, I tell you, for I enjoy company."

"And so do I. But come, let's make the most of the time while we are together. We can't get vodka everywhere."

"That's true."

Both men drained their glasses again. The last speaker was no other than Paul Lieven. He rose and left the room for an instant. The other man, with lightning-like celerity, filled both glasses again. Then quickly he took a small bottle from his pocket, containing some white-colored liquid, and poured the contents into the glass that stood near the seat in which Paul Lieven had been sitting. Then he sat back in his chair and resumed his pipe. Paul walked carelessly back into his seat. As he did so his heavy fur coat brushed against the glass in which the drug had been poured, knocking it off the table and smashing it into fragments.

"Curse him!" muttered the other man, under his breath. "Does he suspect me, I wonder?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the young Nihilist, "that is a bad affair. Well, I guess it'll do more good where it is than if I had drank it."

Again the other man looked suspiciously at him. The words seemed to have a double meaning. Paul sauntered toward the door.

"Where are you going?"

"To get my horse."

"I'm going as well. The sooner we start, the better. I want to get to my journey's end before night."

The two men had left their vehicles in a large shed a considerable distance from the inn. There they had locked them in. The stranger procured the key of the landlord.

"What! Are you going?"

"Yes."

"Pleasant journey."

"Thanks."

Arrived at the shed, the stranger quickly unfastened the door. Then he led forth his sleigh with a pair of horses attached. Paul Lieven stepped hastily inside to do the same. Instantly he heard the door close behind him. He turned around quickly. At once he grasped the latch and tried to open it, but it was firmly locked.

"My friend," he cried, "what does this mean? Is it a joke? If so, let me tell you that I don't like them."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the man who was outside. "I'm sorry I can't stop to talk with you. Fact is, I have a particular appointment at Cerigov. In other words, I'm about to act as deputy for some one else. Can you guess what I mean, Paul Lieven? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Scoundrel!" hissed Paul Lieven. "You shall suffer for this!"

He had recognized the voice of Peter Lisogub, the man he thought he had slain after the explosion at Moscow.

"Ha, ha, ha!" again laughed the spy, as he got into the sleigh and drove off.

For an instant he stopped at the inn.

"Landlord, here is the key of the shed; the other gentleman has gone by the southern road."

Then, lashing his horse, he went off at a furious pace over the snow. Paul Lieven was frantic with rage. He knew the dreadful import of the spy's mission. It meant death to so many of his comrades. The young Nihilist quite understood what the intentions of Peter Lisogub were.

"He intends to personate me!" he cried. "My God! he will destroy all my friends and Marie!" he gasped.

Frantically he shook the heavy door. But it never moved. Then he kicked it furiously. But the hard wood did not even splinter. Paul was in despair. The minutes were flying by. Every moment was taking the spy nearer to Cernigov. To-night, at this place, a meeting of the Brethren of the Mask was to be held.

"And I shall not be there," groaned Paul. "My God! what shall I do?"

Tired at length of beating at the door, for no one came, he sat down to think. There was scarcely a gleam of light in the place; but there was sufficient to show him that a pole ran up one side of the shed, evidently as a support to the roof. He sprang toward it. In an instant he was climbing its smooth surface. Then he began to batter the roof of the building. Fortunately this was old. Soon he had made a hole in it. Then, quick as lightning, he crawled through, slid down the slanting roof of the building, and sprang to the ground. Fast as he could go he dashed to the inn.

"Not gone!" exclaimed the astonished landlord.

"No! That cursed scoundrel—whose neck I'll break at the first chance—locked me in your shed. I've just managed to get out.. Give me the key. I want my horse."

"My lad, I'll come with you. What did the man mean?"

"He's a spy—an agent of the police!" cried Paul Lieven, without thinking.

"And you?"

"Why, one the police would like to get their hands on."

The landlord grasped his hand.

"I do not know you," he said earnestly, "but I believe you are fighting the cause of the people. In any way in my power I will help you."

"You can. Lend me a fast saddle horse. Mine are weary."

In a few moments a magnificent Tartar horse from the Ukraine, that might from his appearance have been the one on which Mazeppa made his famous ride, stood ready saddled.

"God bless you!" cried Paul, as he sprang into the saddle and galloped away.

Leaving the road, he determined to follow the telegraph posts. This he knew would shorten the distance, and enable him perhaps to get to Cernigov in time. With the short-handled whip in his hand, urging his horse forward at a terrific pace, Paul Lieven flew past post after post, bent on foiling the designs of the spy. The landlord had made no mistake. The animal that he had lent to the young Nihilist possessed both speed and endurance. Mile after mile was covered, and still with unabated efforts the gallant creature pressed on. It was night. Cernigov was not a town. It was only a small village. The houses were scattered about thinly. There was no light in the streets. But dark forms might have been seen wending their way toward an old house that stood at the western end of the village. Inside the house at the back was a large room. It had neither windows nor skylight. Consequently, although it was lit at the present time with many lamps, no illumination could be seen from outside.

In this room there were assembled a number of people. So far as could be seen, they all wore black masks. It was a secret meeting of the Brethren of the Mask.

"Brethren," said a tall man masked like the others, "it is not for me to speak to-night to you. We have among us one more worthy to be listened to. Brethren of the Mask, our great chief, the Blue Mask, is with us."

There was a low murmur of applause, and a movement in the room as if the announcement had created a sensation. All eyes were turned to the end of the room. Then they saw a man slowly ascend the steps that led to the platform. On his face he had the blue mask, the emblem of authority. Facing the audience for a moment, slowly amidst intense silence he advanced to the edge of the platform.

CHAPTER VI.—Peter Lisogub Unmasked.

In breathless expectation the people in the room waited to hear the words of the speaker. The Blue Mask was known far and wide as the guiding spirit in Nihilist circles. But few of the conspirators had ever met him. To-night from the four quarters of the empire the devoted men who were fighting for freedom had assembled in this little village. What wonder, then, that the appearance on the platform of their heroic leader caused every heart to beat with emotion! As the man on the platform commenced to speak, the silence was profound.

"My brethren," said the speaker, "this night is a momentous one in the annals of the great struggle in which we are engaged."

He paused for a moment. It seemed that he was speaking with difficulty. It might be easily accounted for by the excitement under which he would naturally be laboring. Then the man on the platform continued:

"I will endeavor to explain to you a scheme which I think is bound to be successful. Shall I proceed now, or wait until a later period of the evening?"

A tall, slender form, masked in blue, rose some little distance from the speaker.

"Neither now nor later," said this blue mask, in stern and menacing tones, "shall you be heard in this room, Peter Lisogub! Seize him! He is a spy of the police!"

With a fierce roar of rage the audience sprang from their seats. The Blue Mask on the platform gazed on his prototype below. The Brethren of the Mask looked from one to the other, completely mystified. The moment was highly critical.

"Seize him, I say!" cried the Blue Mask, who had risen in the room.

But no one stirred. They knew not which was the impostor. Some thought that both men might be traitors to the cause. The man on the platform felt it was necessary to act.

"I am no spy!" he cried. "I am your leader. It is my right to wear the blue mask."

Instantly the other man replied. He spoke in fierce and hurried accents.

"Brethren of the Mask, by virtue of the power given to me as your leader, it is within my right to order all to unmask. Then the traitor would instantly be discovered. To do so, however, would be to expose you all to identification. For myself I care not. This wretch has seen my face before. Let him do so again."

With a rapid movement of his arm he tore the blue mask off his face. Then all saw the pale and refined features, the flashing eyes of Paul Lieven. A slight, slender form in the front row of the audience sprang toward the low platform. The mask which this person was wearing accidentally fell to the ground. Instantly the man on the platform drew a revolver from his pocket. He held it at the head of the unmasked conspirator who was near him.

"Death to the spy! Death to the traitor!" shouted the Nihilists, in low but savage tones.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Peter Lisogub harshly. "It is easy to say that, my friends, but if you advance one step I'll put a bullet into the head of your comrade. If I die, Marie Valerian shall perish first!"

The spy still held his pistol at the head of the unmasked Nihilist. Notwithstanding the masculine garb she had assumed, Paul Lieven, with horror-stricken eyes, saw that the cursed traitor had spoken the truth. It was Marie Valerian whose life was imperiled. A shudder pervaded the assembly. They knew not how to act. Marie Valerian was the darling of the cause; for her every man in the room would have given his life. She broke the silence:

"Comrades, this man must not escape. My life is as nothing compared to the terrible danger that confronts you all if he is not killed."

Still no one stirred.

"Paul," cried Marie Valerian, in ringing tones,

"I ask you to kill this man. Will you do my bidding?"

Paul Lieven's face showed the terrible excitement under which he was laboring. He knew that one movement on his part sealed the fate of the girl he passionately loved. On the other hand, he felt that delay was dangerous. Peter Lisogub would not have ventured into such a nest of Nihilism without having warned the authorities of his movements. At any moment it was apparent, therefore, that the police might arrive.

It is impossible to exaggerate the difficulty of the position. Paul saw that Marie or the cause must be sacrificed. What was he to do? His solemn oath bound him at all costs to place the latter before everything else. What would have happened no one can say. But at this moment the heavy tramp of men was heard outside.

"The Third Section!" gasped the Brethren of the League.

Instantly the lights were extinguished. Bang! In the darkness the report of a pistol was heard. It was followed by a shriek. The cry was that of a woman. With no confusion, notwithstanding the darkness, the little band of devoted men filed out into the gloom. Silently they separated.

"Thank God!" said Paul Lieven, "this miserable wretch did not know everything. If they had known of this exit our fate would have been sealed."

Through the village rapidly went the Blue Mask. Then he thought of the shot he had heard, and of the shriek which had rung through the room.

"My God!" he cried frantically, "I have abandoned Marie to her fate."

By this time Paul knew the room that they had so hastily quitted was filled with police. Then it occurred to him that the spy had escaped.

"I will go back," said Paul Lieven to himself. "Yes, it must be done."

Stealthily he crept back toward the house. The village was absolutely deserted. The Brethren of the Mask had all disappeared. They were used to surprises. Some had found shelter in the scattered houses of the little place. Others had sought safety in the wide and desolate plains that spread for miles in all directions. Paul Lieven felt that he was alone in the midst of his enemies. Never had his high courage been put to so severe a test. He was now so near the house that he could hear the police inside. They were talking loudly. He could even distinguish the voice of Peter Lisogub.

"I'll go nearer," he cried. "I must know if Marie lives."

The back of the house abutted on a field. He climbed over a fence and thus reached the small door by which he and his comrades had made their exit. Violent recriminations were going on inside.

"Through your delay," growled Peter Lisogub, "those people escaped. And I periled my life to capture them. Do you know who were here?" he added slyly.

Apparently he was addressing the chief of the police.

"No."

"I will tell you. The Blue Mask, the leader of the Nihilist conspiracy, and Marie Valerian."

"What!" exclaimed the man, in astonished tones.

"It is true. And they both escaped."

"Thank God for that!" muttered Paul Leiven fervently. "She is safe."

"Who spoke?" cried Peter Lisogub.

In his excitement Paul had spoken aloud. The quick ears of the spy heard the sounds.

"I heard nothing," said the chief of the police.

Without a word, Peter Lisogub dashed open the door and sprang out into the darkness. Paul Lieven had barely time to move away. But he had been seen. Bang! Bang! Twice Peter Lisogub fired at him. Then madly the entire body of police ran from the building. In a moment Paul Lieven, with fifty men at his heels, was flying for his life.

Paul, after a while separated from his men, telling them it was each man for himself now. Paul managed to shake off his pursuers in a patch of woods, and succeeded in making St. Petersburg. He was soon joined by Nicholas Karazin and Marie Valerian, for the house in which he found shelter was owned by a friend of the cause and was a rendezvous for fugitives who had espoused Nihilism. The house had been wired and there were bombs placed so they could be set off in case of a sudden attack from without. The next day after arriving at the house the place was surrounded by their enemies, who entered by way of the roof. Our three friends retreated to the lower floor, and when things became so hot they could not remain there any longer they retreated to a passageway in the cellar which led to the river. As they entered the passage they pulled the switch which set off the bombs in the house overhead. The explosion which followed immediately was terrific. General Mesentkeff was among those that were killed.

"Where now?" asked Nicholas.

CHAPTER VII.—Paul in a Dangerous Situation.

"The river!" muttered Paul.

"Yes; now our time of danger really commences," replied Nicholas.

"That is so."

It was necessary to act with caution. The Neva was frozen. It was broad daylight, and there soon would be thousands on its broad surface. This crowd would be of advantage. But Paul feared that the agents of the Third Section might be there in force. The passage in which they were walking was below the level of the river. A door in the bank opened on to the stream. Glancing through an aperture, Paul Lieven could see that as he had expected there were great crowds on the river. He was undecided for an instant how to act.

"Come, my friends, we must make the attempt," said Paul Lieven. "I bid you both farewell. I will die, but not be captured."

Silently he pressed the hand of Nicholas Karazin.

Tanzin, and clasped Marie Valerian in his arms. The trio ran out. The river was alive with people skating, sleighing, and enjoying themselves, regardless of the awful tragedy that had been enacted but a few moments before on its banks.

"Here they are!" cried a voice. "Seize them!"

"Lost—lost!" muttered Paul, hearing the minister's words. "We are detected!"

Instantly a body of men made for the spot. But just as rapidly another crowd of people were on the scene. They appeared to be engaged in a game of some kind. All were laughing and shouting, and pushing each other about on the ice and snow. In a most mysterious manner this crowd of idle people got between the agents of the police and their victims. Instantly the police agents began to beat them with heavy clubs. It was a scene of confusion. The noise and the cries were heard all over the ice. From all directions people hurried thither, thinking that some game was being played. A crowd, like a snowball, soon accumulates. In a few minutes it must have been over a thousand people.

"Fly, Paul!" said a voice hurriedly. "Mingle with the people and cross the river. Then you will be safe, for you are expected."

Paul Lieven did exactly what the voice suggested. He and his two friends separated after he had hastily repeated to them the words of the man who had spoken. The man was one of the Brethren of the Mask. It was Ivan Zouroff.

"So," thought Paul, as quite at his ease he mingled with the gay and laughing crowd, "this was all arranged. Ivan forgets nothing. Ha, ha! How well it was done!"

The Blue Mask was in a lively mood. He felt that danger was over. Past experience had told him that in a crowd there was safety. So, without undue haste, he made his way across the river. Colonel Demidoff and his men rushed out from the subterranean passage on to the frozen waters of the Neva. As he did so, he saw with amazement the struggling, jostling mass of humanity. He saw his agents engaged in a fight with the populace. Instantly he threw himself into the fray. In a few moments he had restored order. The revelers had departed as if by magic. Colonel Demidoff turned to one of the agents.

"Where have you sent them?" he said.

"Them who?"

"The Nihilists."

"They have escaped," stammered the man, with white, ashy cheeks.

"What!"

In a voice of thunder Colonel Demidoff uttered this word. There was silence.

"And you saw them and let them escape?"

"I could not help it; the Neva was crowded. As my men were about to make an arrest, a large party of these fools threw themselves in the way playing their infernal games, and so the wretches escaped."

Peter Lisogub looked black.

"This is no game!" he cried. "I know these men; it was all arranged beforehand."

"Then," said Colonel Demidoff, "there are many people involved in the crime."

"Many—yes," was the spy's answer. "This affair was decreed by the Brethren of the Mask."

Now the conspirators seemed to have utterly vanished. There was not a trace of them. Peter Lisogub, so disguised that it was impossible to know him, mingled with the crowd on the river. He fancied he might come in contact with some of the conspirators, and in this way gain a clue to the present hiding place of the conspirators. That evening Paul Lieven was seated in a room of a house on the other side of the river. The people who lived in the house were not Nihilists.

But they were, like so many of the Russian people of the upper class, in active sympathy with the revolutionary party. Not caring, or perhaps daring, to embark in the active struggle that was going on between the imperial autocrat and his subjects, they confined themselves to offering shelter to men who were flying from justice. In such houses it was no rare thing for a Nihilist to live for two or three months, until all search for him had died away or it became prudent for him to leave. There were a lady and gentleman in the room besides Paul. As their part in this narrative is small and merely passing, it is not necessary to say much about them. Evidently from their looks and language they belonged to the educated class. All three were drinking tea—a beverage beloved of the Russians, who make the best in the world.

"This is a great day in the annals of the cause," said the man, with energy.

"I wonder who committed the crime?" said the lady. "I have heard, Paul, that in official circles they say it was the act of a woman."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Paul Lieven quietly. "It's useless, my dear friends, to speculate as to who did the deed. Enough that justice has been done to a cruel and murderous wretch, and that the autocrat has had his answer."

"Yes, yes, it was a deed of heroism."

Neither of them questioned Paul as to his share in the transaction, but both suspected he was privy to it.

"Yes, Paul, my friend, here you are safe," said the man. "I stand well with the court, and no one would dare suspect me of harboring Nihilists."

There was a rushing noise on the stairs. A young man, with long black hair and pallid face, burst into the room. His manner was deeply agitated.

"Fly, fly!" he cried. "The police are entering the house. The search has begun."

Already the heavy tramp of the police could be heard as they entered the building. In a few minutes they would be in the room. The four people looked at each other in alarm.

"The window! The window!" cried the lady.

It was the only chance. Paul Lieven sprang up on a chair, for the window was high. He opened it and crawled out on the window ledge. There, with death inside the room and with death staring him in the face if he loosed his hold, he waited events. Meantime the wind blew furiously, and the sleet whirled through the air.

"Move that cup," said the lady.

"No, no!" cried the young lady who had given the alarm. "I will take it."

He sat himself down in Paul Lieven's place at the table. Ten police officers burst into the room. With them was Peter Lisogub. The spy's evil face gleamed with vindictive hatred. Every

Russian knew what such an act meant. Politely the owner of the apartments bade these men search the place. Peter Lisogub looked in every nook and corner. Not a place was left untouched. The police also worked well.

"This time, Peter," said the leader of the police, "our cunning is at fault. You have made a mistake, there is no one here, and there is no place for any one to hide in."

"It may be so, it may be so," growled the spy.

Then his eyes fell on the high casement in the room.

"The window, the window!" he exclaimed. "I must look there."

With beating hearts Paul Lieven's three friends saw him approach the window.

CHAPTER VIII.—A Meeting of the Brethren of the Mask.

Peter Lisogub peered out into the darkness. His eyes pierced the gloom of the night. Without the wind was howling furiously, and the sleet was beating against the house. It was well for Paul Lieven that the night was so inclement. For it caused the spy to close the window hastily.

"Officer!" he cried, turning to the man in command of the police.

"Yes."

"We've made a mistake this time."

The spy turned to the lady of the house, and bowing with an air of much politeness, said:

"I must ask you to pardon us for this unnecessary intrusion."

Then the party marched away. Down the stairs they went. Then along the passage could be heard the measured tread of their footsteps. In a moment the heavy door that opened into the street had closed behind them.

"Let him in!" cried the woman.

"Not yet—not yet!" said her husband. "This cursed spy is crafty. He may not have gone with the rest. Wait; I'll have a look around."

The man went quietly down the stairs. He found that Peter Lisogub had taken his departure.

"Now to let Paul in!" exclaimed the master of the house.

Running into the room, he sprang to the window and opened it.

"Paul—Paul!" he cried.

"Yes," replied a voice feebly.

"Come; it's safe. They've gone."

In a few moments Paul Lieven was again seated with his friends.

"A few moments more," said the Blue Mask, "and I'd have fallen to the ground. I just managed to hang on to the sloping roof, but the cold nearly numbed me."

"That cursed spy looked out, Paul."

"I saw him, my friend, and scarcely dared to breathe."

Some vodka soon put life into the half-frozen Nihilist.

"I'll have to leave you."

"It's not safe."

"I think so. Anyway, I must risk it, for I cannot rest until I know whether Marie is out of danger."

They could not induce him to stay. Hastily he

disguised himself. A thick black beard and heavy mustache concealed the greater part of his face. His thick fur coat and large fur cap aided in the disguise. Thus equipped he went out into the darkness and the storm. The cutting blast almost paralyzed him, but steadily Paul Lieven went on his way. For two hours he walked. Few men could have endured the exposure, but Paul was animated by a sense of duty.

At length he found himself in the outskirts of the great city. He looked around cautiously, pausing near a low-roofed building that stood alone.

"No one about," said the young Nihilist to himself. "I've not been followed."

Quickly he walked to the wooden house and tapped at the door.

"Who is it?" demanded a voice within.

Paul Lieven gave the password instantly and was admitted. Then he found several of his friends assembled. Needless to say, they were overjoyed to see him.

"And Marie," said Paul anxiously, "what of her?"

"She's safe, Paul," answered Feodor. "Ivan has seen her."

"You fooled that wretch, Feodor," said Paul.

"Yes; when I was at the general's, I saw his loathsome eyes scanning me. Ha, ha! he found out the trick too late. They chased me, but I managed to dodge them."

"Now, brethren," said Paul, rising from his seat and speaking in an earnest voice, "the fight between us and the forces of despotism has commenced. We have drawn first blood. But the blow just struck is not enough. We must fight on until the imperial autocrat is on his knees. What say you?"

Paul was wearing the mask of blue. Through it his eyes shone brightly as the burning words fell from his lips. He had assumed the mask before entering the house. There were ten other men in the room. Each man wore a heavy black mask.

"Yes, yes!" they cried, in response to the words of their chief. "Let us fight on, let us fight on!"

"It is well," said Paul Lieven slowly. "The killing of General Mesentkeff may lead to great results. It is necessary for us to be constantly ready, so that at any moment we may strike a blow. For the next three days, brethren, we must meet here every night at twelve o'clock. Is that agreed?"

"Yes, yes."

The assembly broke up. Notwithstanding the terrible danger they ran, these heroic men left their retreat and returned to the city. Daylight had long since appeared. The state of the streets showed how panic-stricken the authorities were. All through the thoroughfares were mounted Cossacks, lance in hand, riding to and fro. Spies swarmed everywhere. There was the professional spy, who knew his business, and there were the casual spies, those, in fact, who had been got up for the occasion. The latter were soldiers, dressed in civilian costume. There were hundreds of them. They had been "got" hastily, and their appearance in most cases was ludicrous. Their stiff, military movements and their martial bearing exposed them. Never had the court been so terrified. The audacity of the

Nihilists was incredible. Alexander, who knew more than his ministers of their movements, since he had kept to himself the details of the famous visit paid to him by Paul and his three friends, was in despair. He lived a horrible life. He almost dreaded to see anyone approach him. He distrusted his most intimate friends. General Bieli had been appointed chief of the Secret Police. The Czar summoned him to the palace.

"General!"

"Your majesty."

"This last event in the blowing up of that old house and the killing of General Metzenkoff is a terrible one. St. Petersburg is no longer safe."

"We are doing our best."

"I do not doubt that, but I mean to leave the city. See that the details of my journey are kept secret. Impose absolute secrecy on the railroad authorities. It is important, for those fiends who are fighting against me will not let me travel in peace if they hear of it."

"Be assured, your majesty," replied the general, "not a whisper of your intentions shall be published."

The Czar began to pace up and down the room. He was in a nervous and irritable state.

"This conspiracy must have a head," he cried; "strike at that. The leader gone, the members of the league will fall asunder. Do you know him?" he demanded, turning to the general.

"We have information that he is a young man of high birth."

The Czar started. He recognized the false guardsman who had made him sign the pardon of Marie Valerian. The general continued:

"But in spite of all our endeavors, we cannot ascertain his identity. He belongs to the Brethren of the Mask."

"Of the Mask?"

"Yes, your majesty. All wear black masks except the leader; he wears a blue one. This much we have ascertained from one of our spies whose services have been great."

"See that he is well rewarded."

"He shall be."

"As for yourself, general, listen to me. Capture this Blue Mask, and there is nothin' I will not give you. I promise you the Chancellorship of the Empire."

The general bowed profoundly and touched the hand of the imperial autocrat with his lips.

"Sire, I will devote my life to the task."

He quitted the room.

"Chancellor of the Empire! By Heaven! This is a prize worth playing for. Now it is war to the knife. Blue Mask, look to yourself!"

As he walked down the stairs of the palace thus he mused. Renewed activity marked this visit of the chief of the secret police to the palace. That same night about twenty men were assembled in the house which Paul had entered during the storm. They were all masked in black. In low tones they conversed. The gathering took place in obedience to the arrangement entered into to meet every night. Suddenly a tall figure made its appearance. The Blue Mask on the face of the newcomer proclaimed who it was. With acclamations the Brethren of the Mask hailed their leader, Paul Lieven. He wasted no time in useless talk, but went directly to the point.

"Brethren!" he cried, "an event of terrible importance has occurred since we met last night."

"Ah!"

There was a suppressed murmur of expectancy from the brethren.

"Yes; his imperial majesty," Paul continued, speaking in a sarcastic tone, "trembles for his safety among his faithful subjects in the capital. He has decided to leave St. Petersburg."

"This is sudden."

"Yes; but four hours ago he gave his instructions to the chief of police, but walls have ears, and we have friends in the palace itself," added Paul, with a laugh.

"Where does he go?"

"To the Crimea."

The news brought by Paul Lieven produced intense excitement. In low but animated tones the conspirators talked. It was three hours later before they left the secret meeting place.

CHAPTER IX.—What Happned to the Imperial Train.

The second bell rang. The train began slowly to move out of the station. It was the imperial train, conveying the Czar, his attendants and servants from the capital to the Crimea. The soldiers presented arms; the band played. In a few minutes the train was out of sight. It consisted of four carriages. In the first three traveled the Czar and his suite. In the last was the kitchen and the sleeping places of the servants.

From St. Petersburg to Moscow slowly the train traveled. The authorities were afraid to go at too rapid a pace. Immense precaution had been taken to insure the safety of the imperial traveler. Along the railroad on both sides were posted soldiers. They prevented anybody approaching the track, for they dreaded some attack on the train. Now it was night; no longer could the occupants of the cars observe the elaborate precautions that had been taken for their safety. The Czar and the Czarina had retired to rest. So had most of the suite. General Bieli was awake. His watchful eyes seemed never to close. He was sitting in the imperial car talking to two members of the staff.

Here and in the kitchen alone was there any sign of life. Some of the servants engaged in the cooking department were still active. It is no sinecure to travel in this capacity with an imperial train. They were making preparations for the elaborate meals to be served on the morrow.

"Be careful, Feodor," said a voice.

It was Paul Lieven who spoke. He and his friend were both dressed in white, as were all the servants of the kitchen. Paul Lieven continued:

"There is a spy of the police in the kitchen. I have discovered this."

"The Czar is in bed, Paul."

"I know it."

"When shall we act?"

"Not yet. I will give the word. It may not be to-night, after all. Unless a favorable chance occurs, I intend to wait until to-morrow night."

"I leave it to you with confidence."

At this moment the train slowed down.
"What does this mean?" anxiously asked Feodor.

"I can't tell. I don't like it."

Anxiously the two friends awaited developments. Then they saw that the train had drawn up at a small station. It was the town of Saratov. For only one instant did the train halt. But this was long enough for a passenger to board it. Paul Lieven was anxiously watching the newcomer. Then his face turned white as death, his limbs seemed to shake, despite his strong will, as he recognized in the man who had got on the train the hated features of Peter Lisogub, the spy.

"My God!" he cried. "Who could have expected this!"

Convulsively he grasped Feodor by the arm. Feodor noticed the pallor on his friend's countenance.

"What ails you?"

"We are lost, Feodor!" cried the Blue Mask. "That man who has just joined us is Peter Lisogub."

"Great Heaven! Can it be true?"

"It is; spite of his disguise I recognized him." The two friends were in an agony of doubt.

"We'd better jump for our lives."

"Not yet, Feodor. I care not to abandon our project so easily, but our danger has increased."

"Let us wait and watch."

"We will."

The spy had gone instantly to the Imperial car to report himself to the chief of the secret police.

"Well, Peter Lisogub," said General Bieli, "what brings you here? Your presence is always ominous."

"General, I caused the train to be stopped, for I have news of the utmost importance to tell. The Brethren of the Mask have planned to blow up the imperial train."

"Ah!" the general laughed. "They will have their work to do, for the track is guarded from end to end, every station is watched."

"Be not too confident, general," said the spy calmly; "the danger is not without, but within."

"What mean you?"

"This: On board this train itself are some of the band."

General Bieli sprang from his seat at this amazing announcement. He looked incredulous.

"It is true, general. My information," continued Peter Lisogub, "leaves me no room to doubt it."

"Very well. Where are they?"

"I expect in the kitchen."

"We shall soon see."

General Bieli rang a bell. The attendant answered the summons.

"Go and bid the steward send here all the servants in the kitchen, one after the other. Invent some present for it. You understand?"

"Certainly."

The attendant, who was an agent of the Third Section, retired to carry out the order. He went direct to the kitchen. In a moment he was conversing with the steward, who also was a police spy. Slatters began to look ominous. Both Paul and Feodor began to tremble for their safety.

Notwithstanding their disguise, they feared Peter Lisogub. Then the steward spoke to Paul.

"My man," he said, "the pages are in bed. Carry some food and drink to his excellency, General Bieli."

Paul Lieven had the greatest difficulty in concealing his emotion. For he saw through the flimsy pretext for sending him into the presence of the general. It was clearly an excuse only, for the attendant himself was still on duty. Feodor and he exchanged glances. But the latter never moved a muscle of his face. He set about obeying the order he had received. Everything now depended on the next few minutes. Passing Feodor, Paul managed to whisper in his ear.

"Follow me," he said, "and be ready to do as I do. Our lives depend on it."

Both the young Nihilists were disguised, but they feared the keen eyes of the spy would detect the imposture. Hastily Paul Lieven collected some few articles of food and drink. With them he passed into the presence of the general. Peter Lisogub was so placed that he could carefully scan the features of the Blue Mask. Paul Lieven placed the food and drink he was carrying before General Bieli. Then Peter Lisogub made an almost imperceptible sign. But the young Nihilist had detected it. He knew what it meant. It was an intimation to the chief of the secret police that the man before him was one of the conspirators.

"As I feared," said Paul Lieven to himself. "This scoundrel has detected me!"

He stood motionless, wondering what would happen. General Bieli meanwhile was scrutinizing him keenly. Then he spoke.

"So you fancied you played with us, my friend," remarked the general, with a cynical smile on his face, "but you've put your neck into the noose instead."

Paul Lieven made no reply.

"Arrest that man," said the general calmly.

Two officers who were with him started from their seats. Quick as lightning Paul Lieven pulled something from his pocket. It was a small oblong box in appearance. Instantly he set it on the table.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed. "I never put my head in the lion's mouth unless I know he can't bite. Move one inch and I'll blow you into atoms!"

Aghast at these words of fearful import, the occupants of the room seemed so petrified with astonishment they could not move. But Peter Lisogub recovered his equanimity sooner than the rest. In a moment he had drawn his six-shooter. He leveled it at the Nihilist and fired.

Bang! The bullet passed within an inch of Paul Lieven's head. Without a moment's delay he dashed out of the car.

"Stop that man!" roared General Bieli.

"Follow me, Feodor!" shouted Paul Lieven; "we must jump for our lives!"

Instantly the two young men stepped out on the platform at the end of the car. Paul undid the small iron gate. Bang—bang! Bang—bang! Not knowing where they might be leaping, the two Nihilists sprang from the train. A shower of bullets from the men who had been aroused by the general's cries followed them, but the bullets passed harmlessly by. In the train all was excitement and confusion. The Emperor him-

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self, hearing the noise of the firearms, rushed from his bed.

"His Majesty must not come here!" cried Peter Lisogub.

General Bieli ran and intercepted him.

"Sire, hasten back!" he cried. "Your life depends on it."

Meanwhile Peter Lisogub and the officers of the Third Section dashed out of the car. They saw the small box that the young Nihilist had placed on the table. They heard its ominous clicking. Not a man among them was bold enough to seize and hurl it from the train. All retreated as far from the car as possible. Then all at once there was a sound like thunder. The powerful chemicals that the small box had contained at last amalgamated. The terrible explosion did fearful damage. The car in which this scene was enacted was only a wreck. Six men in the adjoining car were blown to pieces. A man standing next to Peter Lisogub was struck by a piece of the debris and instantly killed. But the spy escaped unhurt. The emperor and the czarina were unscathed. But they had had a narrow escape. Then amidst the excitement, the train came to a standstill.

But Paul and Feodor had miraculously escaped from injury when they jumped from the train by landing in a snowbank which broke their fall. They heard the noise caused by the explosion and hurried away. But the train had stopped and Peter Lisogub had found the tracks of the two Nihilists. He carried the effects of a disguise with him and he soon appeared as an old man.

In the meantime both Paul and Feodor had arrived at a hut in which, as soon as they gained admission by knocking, they recognized the fact that they would be safe, for the owner was a friend of the cause.

Soon a knock was heard at the door and the peasant, before opening it, led Paul and Feodor into the next room. When the door was opened there stood Lisogub in his disguise. He asked if he could rest a while in the hut, and it was readily granted. Lisogub rested a while, but during that time had heard a squeaking of the floor in the room in which Paul and Feodor were hiding, which convinced him the two fugitives were in the hut.

Lisogub remained but a short time and then resumed his way, muttering to himself: "They think they can fool me, do they?" He soon gathered some of his men together and went back to the hut. They knocked, but receiving no answer, the spy sang out: "Surrender in the name of the Czar! I know you are inside there, Paul Lieven, and escape is impossible."

Paul approached the peasant and said: "We have got you into this fix and are sorry for it."

"Never mind," said the peasant, "we will shed the last drop of our blood in your defence!"

With those words the peasant withdrew the bolts on the door. The police spy and his men rushed into the hut, to be met with a withering fire from its occupants. It was too much for the police spy's men and they beat a hasty retreat, Lisogub leading the way. But in the melee the peasant's son was killed. The father now said he lived only to avenge his son's death.

The peasant now said they would have to get away from the vicinity and told Paul and Feodor to follow him and his wife to the house of a neighbor where he could get two sleighs and teams for the asking. They did so, and soon they were speeding away in two sleighs behind fast horses, Paul and Feodor in one and the peasant and family in the other.

CHAPTER X.—Plotting Against the Spy.

The court was established in the Crimea. The fearful journey to the south was over. But though the Czar could transfer himself, the Czarina and his attendants, he was unable to prevent his enemies following him. The failure of the attempt on the train had rendered the Brethren of the Mask more resolute than ever. They were all quartered in the same town which was around the palace. The place swarmed with agents of the police. Spies were on every hand. Yet in the midst of all those precautions Paul Lieven and his friends lived and plotted. They followed various callings. Not a man amongst them but knew some trade. Paul himself was an expert carpenter, and, dressed as a workman, he found himself unmolested as he went about his calling.

At night meetings of the brethren were held. General Bieli had not gained the great position of Chancellor of the Empire, which had been held before his eyes by the Czar. The attempt on the train had cost him his office. Instead of being Chief of the Secret Police, he had been virtually exiled from court and was now in command of a small military post in Asia. One after another the Nihilists destroyed their enemies.

Mesentkeff was killed, Bieli was disgraced. How would their successor, Barintsky, fare? Time would show. Peter Lisogub was there as well. He had failed to overtake the sleighs containing the fugitives, and mortified at this, he had come on to keep a watch over the palace. Here he hoped to fall in with Paul Lieven once more. Paul Lieven was aware that Peter Lisogub was in the town. His keen eyes had detected the spy in the streets, notwithstanding the disguise he had assumed. A meeting of the Brethren of the Mask was being held.

Paul and Feodor, Ivan and Nicholas were there. So, too, was Marie Valerian. She had eluded the vigilance of the police after the killing of General Mesentkeff, and had followed the court when it moved from St. Petersburg.

"One thought animates me," said Paul Lieven, speaking to the assembled brethren, "we must kill Peter Lisogub. Whilst he lives, the cause is in danger. He knows too many of us. He knows our secrets. As a traitor, his life is long since forfeited. He must expiate his crimes."

"Marie Valerian spoke:

"I have a plan in my head. It is possible I may be able to do what you want."

"You!"

"Yes, brethren; until now I have never breathed it to any one what has taken place between Peter Lisogub and myself. The wretch made protestations of love to me and wished to marry me."

"Great God!" exclaimed Paul Lieven.

He was thinking of the degradation thrust on this high-ranked girl..

"It is true. I believe it was because I refused him that he left our order, betrayed our secrets to the police, and became a spy of the Third Section."

"It may be so, but the man is a villain, and sooner or later his villainy was bound to exhibit itself."

"What is your plan, Marie?" asked Paul Lieven.

"I think it possible I might lure him into our power," replied the girl, "by writing a letter; the thing might be done, for it is possible. I have still the same attraction for him."

At length the scheme was debated. When the brethren separated, it seemed that a net had been woven for the destruction of Peter Lisogub, from which, with all his cunning, he would find difficulty in escaping. For several days Marie Valerian spent a large part of her time in the streets in hopes that she might meet the spy. The idea of writing a letter had been dismissed. It had been decided that the spy would undoubtedly distrust its contents and conclude that a trap had been set for him. She was dressed as a woman of the working class. Her heavy clothes which disguised the elegance of her figure, and the large white cap which effectually concealed her golden hair, gave her the appearance of being the wife of a man of humble position.

A large basket on the arm, such as wives carry when they go to market, completed the illusion. Her patience was rewarded. For on the fourth day after the destruction of Peter Lisogub had been decided upon, she saw the baleful spy issuing from the headquarters of the Third Section. She knew him in a moment. They say love is blind, but it is certain hate is not. And Marie hated the spy more than any living being. Slowly he sauntered down the street. Everything went well to-day. The street was quite deserted. The citizens and the soldiers were taking part in a fete on the ice. Then Peter Lisogub walked up to the window of a store, and looked at the articles displayed for sale. Quickly Marie Valerian approached him. Standing by the side of the spy, suddenly she put her hand lightly on his shoulder. The man started back.

"What! Don't you know me, Peter?" she said quietly, in a voice that successfully disguised the hatred she bore toward him.

"Marie Valerian!" he exclaimed, in tones of wonder.

"Yes, it is me."

The young girl laughed lightly.

"Why don't you seize me, Peter? Why don't you capture the arch-enemy of the Czar? You would gain distinction if you did."

"Heaven is my witness," exclaimed the spy, "that I do not seek to injure you. I love you too well."

"Still?"

"Still! Yes, always!"

"I ought to hate you, but I don't," said Marie Valerian. "Once I did, though."

"She wants to gain my support," he said to himself. "She knows what a powerful man I have become, and is tired of the wretched life she is leading."

"I have much to say to you, Peter."

"Then say it."

"We can't talk here; it's too public."

"That's so."

"Can't you meet me somewhere? I am living at a house with blue blinds on the Sebastopol road, with a lady I know. Come there to-morrow at mid-day."

"Come and meet you there? Eh, it's a fine trap you're setting for me, Marie."

Instantly his suspicions returned.

"I mean you no harm."

"But how do I know I can trust you? You're asking me to put my head into the lion's mouth."

"Do you know Feodor Kirsanoff?"

"Yes, and hate him almost as much as I do his friend."

"So do I," said Marie. "Now listen."

"Say on."

"Feodor shall place himself in the power of the Third Section as a hostage for your safe return."

"You mean it?"

"Yes."

"Now you're talking business. Let Feodor come to-morrow at mid-day, or say a little before, to the courtyard of the Third Section. If I do not return in two hours he will be killed."

"But you will return," said Marie, "and then you promise me that Feodor shall not be touched. I don't like him, but would not betray him to his death."

"I promise you."

Marie was departing.

"Stay!" cried the spy.

"What is it?"

"How shall I know that this man is Feodor?"

"That's true. Let me think. I have it," she added, after a pause. "Feodor will be dressed as a workman, and wear a red scarf around his neck."

"Good! Now I shall know."

Marie, delighted with the result of the interview, departed. So did the spy. He, also, was in the best of spirits.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed. "I knew she would tire of that tall, pale-faced fellow. My time has come at last!"

Whistling a tune, he walked down the street.

CHAPTER XI.—Paul Meets General Barintsky at the Imperial Palace.

In less than half an hour after leaving Peter Lisogub, Marie Valerian was seated in a room with Paul Lieven and Feodor Kirsanoff. It was not in the house on the Sebastopol road with the blue blinds, though. Marie had no intention of entering that place at present. She was doubtful still to what extent she could trust the spy. He might take it into his head to surround the house and have her seized. At the same time she imagined his passion for her was so great that he was not likely to do so. Anyway, nothing was lost by caution.

"And so you think you've fooled him, Marie?" said Paul Lieven laughingly, after he had listened to her story.

"I think so."

"But what did you say about Feodor?" inquired Paul.

"Why, the spy was suspicious. He fancied it was a trap set for him, so I had to say that Feodor would put himself into the power of the Third Section until his return. I arranged that he should go to the courtyard outside the office of the Secret Police."

"But this is madness!" cried Paul Lieven. "I cannot consent that Feodor should be sacrificed in this manner. It is certain death. This wretched spy will point him out to the agents of the police before his departure. It will be impossible for him to escape."

"Then what is to be done?" said Marie.

"Done? Why, I will take his place!"

"You?"

"Yes."

Marie Valerian's face grew pale. She could say nothing, for she could not appear to wish to send Feodor to any danger with which she was afraid to confront Paul Lieven.

"No, no!" cried Feodor, springing to his feet. "Let it be as Marie arranged. I will go to the place and take my chances. If Peter Lisogub is killed what does it matter what happens to me?"

"I admire your spirit," said Paul Lieven, frankly, "but I cannot sacrifice my best friend for such a wretch. No, no, it cannot be. Leave me; perhaps I will think of some other way in which this business can be arranged."

When they saw Paul again about half an hour later, there was a smile of satisfaction on his face.

"I've solved the problem, I fancy, and Feodor at any rate is safe."

He said no more, but wishing them good-by, left the room and the house. That night a ball was taking place at the palace. It was a brilliant scene. The great room was splendidly illuminated. The Czar and Czarina were surrounded by a crowd of soldiers and attendants, ministers and courtiers, attired in dazzling costumes. To look at this scene of gaiety, one would have imagined that all was peace and contentment in the Empire, and that the occupants of the imperial palace were not harassed by fear.

But this was only outwardly. The Czar and many of his ministers were a prey to terror. Gen Barintsky, the new chief of police, had assured him there was no danger. But Mesentkess and Bieli had both done this before. Whom was he to believe? Concealing his emotion as best he could under a face of stolid indifference, the Czar, after taking part in the opening quadrille, retired to an alcove to converse with one of his ministers, leaving his guests free to enjoy themselves to their hearts' content. Strange to say, in this very room was Paul Lieven himself. The Blue Mask had come into this nest of danger in order that he might carry out the plan he had conceived. The young man had found it an easy matter to get a card of invitation.

A friend of his boyhood, Prince Petroff, had been in Paris for many years. He was expected home that day, but a letter to Paul disclosed the fact that his return would be delayed. This was most convenient. The two young men were of the same height and age, and in appearance very much alike. The principal difference was that Petroff had a heavy black mustache. This Paul learned from a portrait his friend had sent him from Paris. This defect art could easily remedy.

It was then as Prince Petroff who had just returned from Paris that Paul Lieven presented himself at the court this evening. The Prince had no near relations, so it was not likely that any one would be present that evening who had seen him recently. For during his sojourn abroad, as Paul knew, his friend had absented himself entirely from society, and had devoted himself ardently to study.

"General Barintsky is here," said Paul Lieven to himself. "I wonder which is the man?"

Moving about among the brilliant throng, at length he heard the general's name pronounced.

"I must speak with him somehow," muttered Paul Lieven.

He had been presented during the evening to several of the guests. One of the number happened to be near Paul while he was thinking over the matter. He touched Paul on the shoulder. The latter instantly turned.

"Why are you not dancing, my dear Prince Petroff?" said the gentleman. "There's some excuse for a man of my age, but none for you."

While Paul was making some sort of reply, the man addressed as General Barintsky approached.

"Prince Petroff!" he cried. "Surely I heard the name mentioned."

"This is the prince," said the gentleman, who had been talking to Paul about his not dancing, at the same time indicating Paul Lieven.

"Welcome, my dear friend!" cried Barintsky, "welcome back to your own land again. How you have grown!" he cried, looking the tall young man up and down with an admiring glance.

"Well, ten years make an alteration in a man," said Paul Lieven, with a laugh.

"They do; but come," replied the general, "let's sit down here," he pointed to a seat. "Tell me what you've been doing. I feel an interest in you, for I knew you as a boy."

The guests envied Paul as he was conducted to a seat by General Barintsky, the rising star of the imperial court. Paul was delighted at the good fortune that had attended him, but wondering if the general by his questions would discover the fraud. He did not know how well acquainted with the life of the real Prince Petroff the chief of the police might be.

"And so you've been studying in Paris?" said General Barintsky.

"Yes."

"Well, my dear young friend, that's better than devoting yourself to gambling and the life that so many of our young men lead."

"I think so."

"The worst of it is, though," said the general earnestly, "that reading and study serve to turn our young men into Nihilists."

"Is that so? And are they active as ever?"

"Worse. Following the murder of General Mesentkess came the attack on the imperial train, though we've prevented any details of the latter getting into the papers. But there's no harm in telling you, my dear prince."

"Not much," laughed Paul Lieven. "I'm not at all likely to be a Nihilist."

"Why, this very day I've unearthed another of their plots."

"Really!"

Paul's heart beat rapidly. He wondered what secret he was about to reveal.

"Yes; they're always plotting, and keep my men active. But I have some good spies in my service. One of them told me of an attempt that was being made to entrap him."

"Hulloa!" muttered Paul Lieven to himself. "Peter Lisogub's been talking. I wonder how much he's told him?"

"You can't always trust these spies," he said aloud.

"Exactly, and I have my doubts of this one," said the general.

"Why not set a trap for him, then?"

"By Heaven! I will. He told me some yarn about a Nihilist of the first rank coming into the courtyard of the office of the Third Section at mid-day to-morrow. Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the general. "I'll see what the scoundrel means. I'll personate the man who's to come to the courtyard, and then if no one else appears in the same dress I shall know the rascal's tried to deceive me. Ha, ha!"

"That's a stroke of genius," said Paul Lieven, gazing at him admiringly.

He could scarcely believe his ears. Henceforth all was plain sailing. General Barintsky himself was to take the place of Feodor.

"Well," laughed the chief of the secret police, "I'm going to work on a different plan to Bieli and Mesentkoff. They were good men, but old-fashioned in their ideas. They left everything to their subordinates, and believed implicitly what was told them. I'll go to work on a different plan. I'll see for myself the ins and outs of everything."

"I wish you success."

"Thank you, prince."

"When I meet you again let me know how you got on. I feel quite an interest in this spy you think is deceiving you."

"I will."

The two men parted. A page came up and summoned the chief of police to the presence of the Czar. Soon after Paul Lieven left the palace. Next day at noon he made his way toward the office of the Third Section. He sauntered about at a point from whence he could obtain a good view of the courtyard. Then he saw a man walking up the street, dressed in exactly the same way that Marie Valerian had told Peter Lisogub that Feodor would be dressed.

He proceeded until he came to the courtyard. At the entrance a man met him. It was a friend of the spy. He saw the two men sneaking together for a minute or two. Then Paul Lieven hurried off toward the house in the Sebastopol road at which Marie Valerian had arranged to meet the spy.

CHAPTER XII.—The Fate of Gen. Barintsky.

Peter Lisogub did not display his usual caution on this occasion. Without taking any precautions he hurried to the house in the Sebastopol road. Boldly the spy walked up to the door and rang the bell. He was admitted by Marie herself. She smiled pleasantly.

"Alone?" he said.

"Yes; I sent the woman who lived here away."

"So much the better."

Marie showed him into a small front room on the ground floor. The spy seated himself in a chair. Marie was near him.

"So you couldn't resist me?" he said laughingly.

The girl hid her disgust with difficulty.

"No, Peter," she said.

"Well, Marie, since you and me have arranged matters, why stay here?"

"I don't understand you."

"It's clear enough. The sooner we're married, the better."

"Married!"

The girl saw she had nearly betrayed herself. The color rose to her face, but he thought she was blushing.

"I must be more careful," she said to herself.

"Of course—of course," laughed Marie Valerian. "We'll be married, but your remark was so sudden it surprised me."

Peter Lisogub rose from his chair and tried to embrace Marie, but she eluded his grasp.

"I don't know why you shrink from me, my girl, if you love me as you profess. Are you playing me false?" he added, in threatening tones.

"No, no!" responded the bewildered girl.

"Because it will be the worse for you, I tell you, if you try any tricks. Your friend Feodor is up at the courtyard of the Third Section. Ha, ha!" laughed the Russian, "when I return it will be bad for him."

"Bad for him."

"Yes, I've given orders to two of my men to shoot him the instant they see I'm safe back again."

"Then he shall never leave here alive," said Marie Valerian mentally.

Peter Lisogub determined to kiss his bride that was to be. He ran toward her. Divining his intention, resolved to save Feodor, and despairing of any one coming to her assistance, hurriedly she drew a six-shooter from her pocket. She held the weapon right at the head of the spy.

"You villain!" she cried, as her blue eyes flashed with anger, "you shall never leave this room while you have life in you! Peter Lisogub, you little know me! I brought you here that you might die. Too long we have borne with you. Only your death can expiate your life of crime!"

Bang! bang! Before the spy could answer, the girl fired twice. The bullets missed the man at whom she had aimed. His escape was miraculous, for the leaden missiles passed within an inch of his head. Quick as lightning Peter Lisogub dashed to the window and threw it open. Bang! Bang! As he sprang out into the garden the girl fired two more shots at him. But her agitation had prevented her taking good aim. She saw to her mortification she had missed him.

"Paul!" she cried frantically.

The Blue Mask appeared. He had a smile of satisfaction on his face. Marie was astounded. Nay, more, she was mad with passion.

"Have you, too, turned traitor!" she cried. "By Heaven! you allowed that scoundrel to escape, and you have left Feodor to meet his death at the hands of the enemy."

But to her amazement through the door by which Paul Lieven had entered, came Feodor Kirсанoff. Marie Valerian was speechless with sur-

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prise. Meanwhile, without losing a moment, the spy, mad with rage over the way in which he had been fooled, hurried to warn the officers of the Third Section. Soon he came in sight of the courtyard. He saw to his satisfaction that Feodor was still there.

He could see him strutting up and down by the courtyard, and recognized him by the large red scarf round his neck, the bright color of which rendered the man very conspicuous. Behind the doomed man he saw the two men to whom he had given secret instructions. Suddenly he stopped. Then he raised his right hand high over his head. Crack, crack! The two men who were acting under his orders at once raised their rifles to their shoulders and fired. There was a yell of agony as the man with the red scarf threw up his arms and fell heavily to the ground.

"Treason—treason!" he gasped feebly. "Arrest—"

The words died on his lips. The man's head dropped back. He was a corpse. Instantly a crowd of police agents, spies and soldiers surrounded the body. They were all amazed at the scene which had just been enacted. It was so sudden and unexpected.

"Who is he?" demanded a man who, from his dress and bearing, seemed to be of high position.

"Feodor Kirsanoff, the celebrated Nihilist—a member of the Brethren of the Mask!" cried Peter Lisogub. "See! I will tear off his disguise."

In an instant the spy had removed the false beard and wig which the man was wearing. Then, speechless, the entire party, aghast with astonishment, gazed on the features before them. They were those of General Barintsky, the chief of the secret police.

When Marie Valerian had recovered from her astonishment at seeing Feodor enter the room, she demanded an explanation.

"Why did you not go?"

"Because Paul arranged differently."

"And I had no chance to tell you, Marie," said Paul Lieven.

"But why allow Peter Lisogub to escape?" she asked hotly.

"Because the man who had taken Feodor's place was known to me. It was through me he did so. I wanted him to die."

"But who is he?"

"General Barintsky!"

"The chief of the secret police?" exclaimed the girl, starting to her feet.

"Yes."

"Great Heaven! All is forgiven, Paul!"

She took his hand and pressed it affectionately.

"By this time, Marie, one of the greatest of our enemies is probably dead. But the fraud will be discovered. Here we are not safe, for search will be made. We must fly!"

"But where? Must we leave the town?" said Feodor.

"There is no occasion. Let us seek refuge with our friends."

Separately each of the three conspirators departed from the house. It is as well to return to the courtyard of the Third Section. The discovery that the dead body on the ground was that of General Barintsky caused the utmost ex-

citement. The face of the spy became ghastly pale. He realized the fearful mistake he had made, and apprehended the most serious consequences for himself. Peter Lisogub's keen intellect saved him at this crisis in his career. The two soldiers had it in their power to send him to the scaffold. Quick as lightning, while the excitement and the confusion were at their height, the spy came to a decision.

"There is treason!" he shouted. "Those men are Nihilists! Kill them!"

In a moment both the soldiers fell, pierced by a dozen bullets. The instant the shots had been fired the official who appeared to be in command saw the folly of his action. He had destroyed the two men whose evidence might have been valuable. Suspiciously he regarded Peter Lisogub, but the latter bore the inspection without flinching.

"Consider yourself under arrest," said the officer.

"Stay!"

"Speak quick, then."

"What I have to say is for your ear alone. I know the people who caused this murder."

The two men walked apart from the rest of the crowd. Then briefly Peter Lisogub told him about the incidents at the house in the Sebastopol road, giving him only such details as suited his purpose.

"There may be time to arrest them yet. Let me lead the party," continued the spy. "After all I have dared and done you cannot doubt my devotion to his Imperial Majesty."

"Very well. I will accompany you myself."

With the soldiers and several agents of the police, the spy and the officer hurried away to the house from which Peter Lisogub had lately escaped. They found the place absolutely deserted. But the disordered aspect of the room in which the interview between the spy and Marie Valerian had taken place, and the bullet marks that were apparent, seemed to confirm the story of the spy. Back to the headquarters of the Third Section went the party. A rigid investigation took place. It resulted in Peter Lisogub being completely exonerated. The utmost consternation prevailed. None knew who the next victim of the Nihilists might be.

General Lobanoff was appointed to succeed the dead man. Notwithstanding the dangers attaching to the post, there were no lack of candidates. The same night, notwithstanding the vigilance of the authorities, the Brethren of the Mask managed to meet. In a cellar of a house in the heart of the town they were assembled. Paul Lieven, wearing his blue mask, was there. The rest of the brethren had assumed their black masks. Marie Valerian, the only woman admitted to the society, was also present.

"Brethren," said Paul Lieven, addressing his comrades, "once more the bolt has fallen, another of our enemies has been laid low. Most of you know that General Barintsky is dead. But Peter Lisogub still lives."

"But he must die!" cried Nicholas Karanzin. "He must die!"

"Surely," answered Paul Lieven, "and I will answer for it that the villain has not many more days to live. But listen, the tyrant, the Czar, so far from yielding, has signalized this moment

to put still further restrictions upon the liberty of his subjects. Brethren, this time we must strike higher. The Czar must die!"

Instantly every one was full of attention. Paul Lieven did not keep them waiting. Slowly and clearly he unfolded his plans.

"The emperor will attend a performance at the little theater in Moscow street next week."

"But that does not help us. We shall have no chance to kill him as he goes to the theater. He will be too well guarded."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Paul lightly. "We shall be in the theater, my friends. True, we shall not be among the audience, but we shall be better placed, for we shall be on the stage itself."

Cries of amazement broke forth. They fancied Paul must be dreaming.

CHAPTER XIII.—What Happened at the Imperial Theater.

The scene at the Imperial Theater was a brilliant one. The opera that was being played was the "Mascotte," and the tuneful music and clever acting and singing pleased the imperial autocrat. But his safety was not lost sight of. General Lobanoff could not afford to take any chances. In all parts of the theater agents of the police were sitting among the audience. Unsuspected they keenly scrutinized every face. On the stage were spies. Among the chorus were police agents. There was an agent of the police at the stage door inspecting every one who entered. Peter Lisogub himself, still in high favor, was lurking about, like a thing of evil, behind the scenes.

As the Blue Mask had said, he, Feodor and Marie had easily obtained places among the chorus. Ivan, Nicholas and Serge were engaged in various capacities. This, too, Paul had managed. So, on this eventful night, on the stage and behind the scenes, were six determined enemies of the Czar, who had all taken an oath of the most exacting nature to destroy him. The prima donna was in the front of the stage, singing the famous "Glu-Glu" song. The chorus was around the sides and back.

"Paul!"

"Yes."

It was Feodor who had spoken.

"When do we operate?"

"After this song. The chorus—in fact, the whole company—advances to the front of the stage. Directly the orchestra commences you, Marie and I must do our work. Then we must fly. Ivan and the others understand their business."

"It is well."

Neither man showed the slightest sign of agitation. Both were absolutely unrecognizable in their stage costume. The prima donna ceased. The song had been encored. At length the audience desisted in their demand for a further repetition. Immediately the chorus, forming into a column, advanced to the front of the stage. Paul Lieven, Feodor Kirsanoff, and Marie Valerian were in the first line. The leader of the orchestra raised his baton. The musicians commenced to play. Paul Lieven uttered a slight

sound. It was a signal. Instantly three arms were raised in the air. Three bombs, terrible agents of death, were thrown toward the spot where the Czar was sitting. There was a frightful explosion. Smoke filled the air. Cries of anguish and exclamations of fear and despair pervaded the assembly. In all parts of the theater rose agents of the police.

"Seize them!" cried a stentorian voice. "They are on the stage."

It was General Lobanoff who spoke. Instantly a rush was made for the stage. Paul Lieven and his two companions had not waited a moment to see the result of their work. They darted off the stage. So did everybody on it. At the wings all was confusion. Peter Lisogub was on the spot. He had not seen the bombs thrown, but he quickly realized from whence they had descended. Paul ran against Ivan, Nicholas and Serge.

"It is done," he said. "Now to make our escape."

Quickly the six Nihilists traversed the narrow passage that led to the stage door. At their heels were many men.

"Surrender!" cried Peter Lisogub.

Ivan and Serge turned and fired. They hoped to kill the spy, whose voice they had recognized. But the bullets missed him. A shower of bullets whistled after the fugitives. But they hurried on, unhurt. Into the side streets ran the Nihilists. They had now all separated. Peter Lisogub had found his way to the street, and he saw a figure concealed in the darkness of a doorway on the opposite side of the street. The man was evidently trying to avoid observation. The spy started to make his way across. Like a panther the spy bounded into the doorway.

"Follow me!" he cried, turning to the men behind him. "I have one of them."

Then, rushing into the passage of the house after the unknown, he saw him suddenly stumble and fall. The light burning overhead revealed in the unknown the features of Paul Lieven.

CHAPTER XIV.—Conclusion.

Peter Lisogub shouted with joy.

"Ha, ha!" he shouted. "I think I have you this time. Don't move or I'll shoot you!"

Regardless of the threat of the spy, Paul Lieven sprang to his feet. Pulling a revolver from his pocket, the young man fired twice at the spy. The second shot was followed by a cry of rage and pain. The spy had been shot through the arm. Then with a bound Paul Lieven sprang off the ground, and extinguished the lamp which had been burning overhead. All was now in total darkness. In this gloom Paul Lieven made his way rapidly, as one who knew the place well, along the passage to the rear of the house. Rapidly, under the shadow of the houses, Paul Lieven made his way. Soon he stopped at a house, and was admitted on knocking.

"Thank God!" cried several voices. "You've come at last. We thought you were taken."

"No; but I had a narrow escape."

Rapidly he told Feodor, Marie Valerian, Ivan and Nicholas, who were in the room, what had happened. All that night and the next day the

little band of fugitives remained in a constant state of anxiety. Toward evening Paul Lieven made up his mind to go out and see how matters stood. Carefully he disguised himself. Dressed in an ordinary walking costume and wearing a thick fur-lined overcoat, as soon as it was dark Paul left the house, and made his way toward the palace, where he soon ascertained that the Czar had escaped unhurt from the theater.

While he was hurrying back to inform his friends of their failure to accomplish the death of the Czar, he almost ran against a man who had turned the corner sharply. Paul Lieven started, notwithstanding the control he usually exercised over himself, for he saw that the newcomer was Peter Lisogub. The keen eyes of Peter Lisogub, which let nothing escape them, had detected him instantly. Keeping the form of the Blue Mask before him, he never lost sight of it, until he saw Paul Lieven enter the house which he had left some time previously. Then as fast as he could go he hurried away to acquaint General Lobanoff with the news that he had found the hiding place of Paul Lieven. The chief of the secret police was delighted with the intelligence conveyed to him by the spy.

The general dismissed Peter Lisogub, telling him to wait in the ante-chamber.

Then, summoning his lieutenant, he discussed with the latter the necessary measures to be taken to entrap Paul Lieven. At this time, in the house in which Peter Lisogub had seen the Blue Mask enter, Paul Lieven was telling his friends of the result of the attempt on the life of the Czar. Suddenly the quick ears of Nicholas Karanzin detected a sound outside.

"Not a word!" he cried in a whisper, "but listen."

For a few moments no one spoke. Without and within was intense silence. Then a stern voice was heard to give this order:

"Open, in the name of the Czar!"

It was General Lobanoff who had spoken. Paul Lieven and his friends knew that but a few minutes would elapse before the police would enter the building. They took up their position at the top of the first flight of stairs, resolved to stand their ground on this spot and fight until they were killed. In less than five minutes there was a terrific explosion outside. The strong door was shivered into splinters. In a moment or two a crowd of men rushed into the narrow passage of the house.

"Fire!" cried the Blue Mask, in ringing tones.

All the conspirators discharged their weapons together. Two men fell dead on the floor. Two others were mortally injured.

"Charge up the stairs in a body!" cried General Lobanoff. "Do not kill if you can help. I want," said the general, smiling ferociously, "to have some sport with these men, so take them alive."

No sooner were the words out of the general's mouth than in a body the police charged up the stairs.

"Come, friends!" cried Feodor frantically. "There's just a chance for life. Follow me!"

They knew not what he meant, but resolved to fight to the last, for life is sweet and worth defending. They hurried after him up the stairs till they found themselves at the top of the

house. Then they stood on the flat roof of the building. Feodor lost not a moment. They saw him lift a large plank and project it far out over the edge.

"It's fixed!" he cried.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Paul.

"No," he answered laughingly, "this plank leads to freedom. The house is built alongside a rocky hill. Once across, the open country is before you."

Feodor seized Marie Valerian by the hand.

"Come!" he said.

At the same instant Nicholas Karanzin, Serge, and Ivan threw themselves in the way of the police who sprang toward the girl. A dark form glided past the three Nihilists. It was Peter Lisogub. Pistol in hand, he darted toward Marie Valerian. Quick as lightning he fired at her. But Paul Lieven had seen all. He sprang on the edge of the roof before the spy fired, and dashed up his arm. The shot missed the girl. Then in a grasp like iron Paul Lieven clutched the spy.

For a moment or two he swayed on the edge of the roof. Then he threw up his hands and fell headlong into the abyss. On the hard stones below Peter Lisogub was dashed to pieces. Bravely did Nicholas Karanzin and his comrades struggle to protect the retreat of their friends. No sooner had Paul Lieven overcome the spy than with horror-stricken eyes he saw Nicholas, Ivan and Serge killed before him. To remain was useless. Feodor and Marie were calling frantically to him. He rushed across the narrow plank. Arriving on the other side, he tossed it into the abyss. Then Feodor, Marie and Paul disappeared.

After incredible dangers the three young Nihilists escaped from the country. Eventually they landed in New York. Paul and Marie were married. Feodor always remained their closest friend. Here in this land of freedom they lived and dreamed of the time when they would strike another blow for the enfranchisement of their unhappy country.

Next week's issue will contain "DICK, THE APPRENTICE BOY; or, BOUND TO BE AN ENGINEER."

HER HUSBAND'S BOSS.

When Miss Mabel E. Snyder of Melmore, O., became Mrs. Duff R. Mesnard, there was nothing said about "obey;" but she became her husband's boss through the ceremony.

She is postmistress of Melmore, and as a rural carrier her husband went right along obeying her orders.

Because she married a postal employee, she will lose her position, and Melmore may lose its postoffice.

The Postoffice Department ruled that the wife of a rural mail carrier cannot be postmistress. Nearly every one in the village thinks it a foolish ruling, and no one has applied for the appointment.

Unless there is an applicant for the civil service examination May 28, the postoffice may be closed, the village has been notified.

CURRENT NEWS

SAVED WITH DYNAMITE.

A thrilling story comes out of northern Ontario. The women of an Indian encampment were attacked by timber wolves while the men were absent trapping. With the few rifles left in the camp the women defended themselves until the ammunition gave out and their situation became perilous. An Indian boy thought of some sticks of dynamite for use in lakes when fishing was bad. A bundle of them with caps and fuses was thrown among the wolves and the explosion killed 36 wolves and frightened off the remainder.

DIGS UP CHARM.

Unearthed by a gardener, an unusual Elk watch charm, lost nine years ago, has just been returned to its owner, J. W. Cook, Billings, Mont. Cook obtained the two teeth on the Crow Reservation, and had them mounted in a setting bearing his monogram.

In 1912 he lost it. Since then he has moved to another home. The occupant of his former residence, spading in the garden the other day, uncovered the charm. Knowing Cook, he recognized the monogram and returned the trinket, which had suffered no damage.

CATCHES 9-FOOT SHARK.

H. E. Berbyshire of Philadelphia, a member of the Manufacturers' Club and one of Cape May's summer cottagers, had a thrilling experience with a shark in the Delaware Bay off Cape May Point the other afternoon while fishing for channel bass. After hooking five large bass he hauled them alongside of his cruiser cycle from which he was fishing. There a large shark bit them off the line.

Seeing that the shark was getting the benefit of the day's catch, Berbyshire baited a large hook and soon had the shark fast to the line. After an hour's battle the shark was brought alongside and landed. He measured nine feet long and weighed more than four hundred pounds.

VIGILANTES RUN 200 OUT OF TWO INDIANA TOWNS.

More than a hundred foreigners, employed in the coal fields of Gibson and Pike counties, Ind., were forced to leave by a crowd of alleged Vigilantes recently.

There was no bloodshed, so far as was learned. Francisco, eight miles east of Princeton, was the scene of the most of the moving.

The action is said to have followed the importation of foreigners to work in the mines. W. E. Cox, superintendent of the Ayrshire District Coal Co. & Company, an American, and his family, also were forced to leave and told never to return.

One hundred foreigners employed on a railroad construction north of Oakland City also are leaving. Thirty automobile loads of Vigilantes visited the region.

Trouble began in Francisco a month ago when Cox hired three miners to whom resident miners objected, asserting the company was attempting to bring in foreigners, and exclude local men. During the last few days more foreigners have been employed, according to Francisco men.

BANDIT ON WAY TO PRISON ROBS OFFICERS.

Roy Gardner, mail car bandit, who was being brought to the Federal prison at McNeil Island from San Francisco, escaped from Federal officers at Castle Rock, Oreg., June 11, by jumping from a car window, after holding up the officers at the point of a pistol, which he had concealed in his shirt, and taking their weapons and \$200 in cash.

Gardner was taken from the train at Sacramento, Cal., yesterday to search for a mail sack, said to contain nearly \$180,000 in bonds, which he said he had hidden under a tree near that city, but he was unable to locate the pouch.

Gardner took the \$200 from Deputy United States Marshals Mulhall and Webb and left the officers wearing their own handcuffs as he leaped out of the window of the lavatory.

Gardner was aided by Frank Pyron, who was being taken from Densmuir, Cal., to McNeil Island by the same officers. Pyron also escaped. The break for liberty was made following Gardner's request that he be permitted to go to the lavatory. Catching the officers off guard, he whipped out a revolver that evidently had been sewed into his shirt and ordered them to raise their hands. He gave the gun to Pyron, who held the officers up while Gardner went through their pockets, taking the money and guns, and later placing the handcuffs on them.

HER OVERALLS SHED COCAINE AS SHE FLED.

As passengers were going aboard the liners Cedric and Lapland the other morning to sail for Europe a slight figure in overalls slipped out from Pier 61, at the foot of West 21st Street, and started across 11th Avenue.

A pier guard, attracted by the haste of the person, called out:

"Hey! where are you going?"

The figure plunged into the traffic of taxis and trucks on the avenue. The guard and a policeman gave chase. The fleeing person began taking packages from the overalls and throwing them in the street. Then the person's hat flew off and long black hair dropped over a slight woman's shoulders.

The woman jumped into a taxi that was waiting for her and disappeared in the crowd.

The guard and the patrolman picked up the packages and found in them fifty small bottles of cocaine. The woman evidently had disguised herself in the overalls to look like a pier worker and had secured the cocaine from a member of the crew of some ship.

The Young Mail Carrier

—OR—

The Dangers Of The Postal Road

By WILLIAM WADE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

Black Dick was on a dead run, stretching his long limbs to their utmost in obedience to the command of his rider, and the mounted bandits were riding at a sharp gallop down the slope that led from the buttes, and this combination of movement did not make it an easy thing to hit any sort of mark at the distance of five hundred yards, so Tom wisely selected the largest possible target for his shots, and these were the horses instead of the riders.

He was a splendid shot with either hand, and while the mounted men were reaching for their rifles he pulled the triggers of his revolvers, and down went two of the horses, shot through the body.

One of the other horses was very close behind the first animal to fall, so close that he could not avoid him. He tried to leap, but his forelegs struck the upraised head of the wounded animal, and he pitched forward, throwing his rider to the ground.

The fourth horseman pulled up short, jumped from the saddle, and ran to the aid of the riders of the two horses which Tom had brought down with his twin shots. The men were sprawling on the grass, having fortunately fallen clear of their mounts as they went down.

Tom took all this in with one swift glance and made up his mind that he had nothing to fear from the men for a minute or so, so demoralized were they by the far-reaching results of the revolver shots, and at once made up his mind what course to pursue.

The girl was still running towards him, and thrusting his pistols into the holsters, the boy seized the reins with his left hand and guided the black stallion towards Betty.

"Stand still, Betty," he shouted, and the girl at once came to a stand in the middle of the road. Up dashed Tom, gradually checking the speed of his horse as he approached the girl, bent down low from the saddle in the way that the cowboys had taught him, caught the girl around the waist with his right arm, swung her clear from the ground, and placed her gently in front of him.

Then he spoke to Black Dick and pulled up on the reins, and the noble stallion, making nothing of his double load, leaped away down the road at an astonishing pace.

One swift glance the boy cast over his shoulder towards the spot where the four men had been dismounted.

Two of the men were in the act of remounting the uninjured horses, and the other two, ap-

parently but little the worse for the tumbles they had taken, stood near them.

Tom could only risk that one fleeting glance, for the road was somewhat rough at that point, and it was necessary for him to look sharply for obstacles and guide Black Dick away from them.

He spoke to the girl.

"Miss Cornwallis."

"My name is Betty."

"Betty, then. You are looking over my shoulder and can see the men. What are they doing?"

"Two of them are mounted and are coming after us, and the other two are holding on to the stirrup leathers and running at the side of the horses."

"That's all right," said Tom. "Even with a double load Black Dick can keep the lead he has for a half mile, and by the time we have made that distance I shall be prepared for the rascals."

As he uttered the words the boy turned the horse from the road and began to make his way across a sloping piece of land that led to a grove of trees a half mile away.

"Have they turned off after us, Betty?" he asked.

"Yes, but now the men have let go of the stirrup leathers and are running behind the horses."

"Do they gain on us?"

"No, not an inch."

"Then it is a sure thing that they are doing their best, and we can keep out of rifle range without increasing our speed."

Straight on for the grove sped the black stallion with his double load, carrying it with superb ease, and after him came the other horses, their necks stretched out in a manner that plainly told that they were doing their best.

"Do we still keep our distance, Betty?" asked Tom, holding the pretty girl with a firm clasp, while with his other hand he guided Black Dick so as to secure the best traveling.

"Yes, we have not lost a foot of ground," as the answer.

Two minutes later Black Dick dashed in among the trees of the grove and Tom brought him to a standstill.

CHAPTER VIII.

How Tom and Betty Defended Themselves In the Grove.

Wheeling his horse so that he faced the oncoming pursuers, Tom quite reluctantly allowed Betty to slip from his arm to the ground and then sprang from the back of Black Dick and looked out from the gloom of the trees to the light space over which the robbers were traveling. He held his revolvers in his hands ready for instant use, and had the bandits ridden within range he would have instantly fired on them.

The latter, however, seemed to recognize the danger in riding towards the grove, and pulled up out of range. There they sat still on their horses until the other two men, the ones on foot, ran up to them.

(To be continued.)

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

GETS HIDES OF NINE BABY WOLVES.

George Berg delivered at the office of the Brown County Auditor Aberdeen, S. D., the other day the hides of nine baby wolves, upon which he will receive county bounty in the sum of \$1 per scalp and \$2 per scalp in State bounties.

Berg lives near Verdon and a few days ago he discovered an old she wolf in his chicken yard. The animal started away at his approach and Berg got into his Ford automobile and followed her.

Across the prairie the wolf took her course with the Ford in pursuit. The animal finally arrived at her den and disappeared. Berg reached the spot a few minutes later and with a spade excavated to the home of the wolf, where he found her nine babies. He drove the old wolf out and captured the cubs, whose hides he has sold to the county.

NEW BANK IN THE ARCTIC.

The most northerly banking office in the world will be established by the Union Bank of Canada before the end of summer, according to an announcement by the New York agency of the institution, at 49 Wall Street. The new branch will be at Fort Norman, on the Mackenzie River, 1,400 miles north of Edmonton, in the center of the new Canadian northern oil fields, within a few miles of the arctic circle. A staff and equipment for the new office is now being pushed as rapidly as possible by canoe, scow and river steamer up the Mackenzie River, in an attempt to be ready for business when the flood of expected oil prospectors begins to flow into the Mackenzie region early in July.

The Fort Norman office will be the second branch opened in the Mackenzie district by the Union Bank of Canada within the month. On June 8, the bank opened an office at Fort Smith, on the Slave River, within a few miles of the northern boundary of the province of Alberta.

ACCUSED BY CONVICT.

John Smith, one of two prisoners who escaped from the Rensselaer County jail May 5, and was subsequently recaptured, testified before a sub-committee of the New York State Commission of Prisons that Under Sheriff George T. Morris connived at his escape. The testimony was given at a hearing of charges against Sheriff John Seeley, Jr.

"Morris gave me a file the latter part of April," Smith told the prison Commissioners, "and said that if I wanted to make a key to get out of jail I could, but that I should not tell any one."

Smith said that he had never mentioned the incident about the file to any one. After Morris gave it to him he made a key that would unlock the jail door, he said.

Under Sheriff Morris, who at a previous hearing gave testimony against Sheriff Seeley, told

the committee to-day that he did not care to dignify Smith's story with a denial.

RAISE NEW LIBERTY POLE.

An exact reproduction of the Liberty Pole which stood in City Hall Park in 1776 and which was presented to the city with appropriate ceremonies on Tuesday, June 14, was set up in the park June 10 on the identical spot where the original pole stood. The latest pole is the gift of the Sons of the Revolution and the New York Historical Society.

Faith Brown, daughter of Henry Collins Brown, member of the New York Historical Society's committee, shared with the Mayor the honors of helping to put the pole in place. While

cameras clicked the Mayor dug the first spade-ful of earth, and a large crowd applauded. At the base of the hole was planted a box containing bulletin of the New York Historical Society, copies of current newspapers, official records of the Sons of the Revolution and copies of Valentine's Manual of Old New York and Guide to New York.

The pole stands between Broadway and the City Hall, on a line with Warren Street.

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A NARROW ESCAPE.

By KIT CLYDE.

The twilight was rapidly deepening into the dark on a pleasant evening in June, as a young horseman of twenty-two or three years of age emerged from the forest path and, checking the animal's pace, paused for an instant or two contemplating the scene before him.

A truly pastoral scene it was, though only a settler's humble clearing on the very confines of civilization, and to the young man it was the dearest spot on earth.

It was the home of old Seth Morgan, one of the first of the hardy pioneers who more than seven years before had penetrated to these Western wildernesses, and out of the heart of the primeval forest hewed a homestead for himself and family.

It was not an excess of affection for the hardy settler, however, that caused such emotion to fill the breast of the young man, whose name was Edward Weston, but a far deeper feeling—the strong and passionate love he cherished for his eldest daughter, Clara, who was his affianced wife.

The girl returned his affection, and the following day had been appointed for the wedding.

Already the guests had been invited, and more than a dozen men and women standing about the door of the little log cabin waved their hats and handkerchiefs toward the expectant bridegroom as he paused for a moment after emerging from the forest.

Again urging on his horse, in a few minutes longer he had reached the house, and dismounting, was warmly greeted by the guests.

Another moment and his betrothed wife was clasped to his breast.

Guests from distant clearings came gradually dropping in, until when the night had fallen they numbered more than twenty of both sexes, and by ten o'clock the floor had been cleared for dancing, the enlivening strains of the fiddle floating through the open window upon the calm night air.

Had the merry-makers but known that more than a hundred dark-skinned figures, their faces hideous with crimson war-paint, were crawling stealthily toward the house, it might have changed their joyousness to fear; but they suspected nothing until it was too late, and with fiendish cries of exultation upon this lips the savages were among them.

Taken wholly by surprise the settlers had not the ghost of a chance to defend themselves, and although they fought like men who expect no mercy, a few minutes and it was ended.

With his body protecting the girl he loved, Edward Weston had fought with the ferocity of despair, and more than one villainous savage had fallen never to rise again beneath the strokes of his bowie knife; but at last he was overpowered by numbers, and the blood streaming from a ghastly wound upon his forehead, he sank unconscious to the ground.

When he again came to himself the day was

breaking, and he was lying in a pool of blood among the cold and mangled remains of the wedding guests.

Staggering to his feet as recollection gradually came back to him, a feeling of surprise mingled with his despair.

Among the corpses there were no female ones except that of Mrs. Morgan, and the conclusion presented itself that the rest of the women had been carried off alive.

A ray of hope shot through Edward Weston's breast at the thought.

Clara might still be alive, and if she were his life still had a purpose.

He would recover her, dead or alive, from her savage captors, and wreak upon them such a vengeance as should be remembered for years.

As he made this resolution, he staggered toward the little brook that flowed past the rear of the house, and laving his brow with the cool water and binding up his wounds, in a short time he left stronger.

Fortunately, his horse had not been placed in his stable, but turned loose to pasture, and in less than half an hour he was ready for his desperate enterprise.

He had been a hunter from his very childhood, and to his practiced eyes the trail of the Indians, although evidently concealed with the greatest care, was not hard to find.

Once upon it, he mounted his horse, and rode at headlong speed.

In the course of several hours, the evidences of precaution the savages had used so far to cover their trail became less marked, and he knew he must be approaching their encampment.

Suddenly the howls of the legion of mongrel curs, always to be found following an Indian camp, smote upon his ears, and the next moment he saw in the distance the gleam of the smoldering fires.

Checking his horse, he dismounted, and securing the animal in a clump of thick undergrowth, he prepared to continue the trail on foot.

Besides two revolvers and a small satchel containing cartridges, he had two bowie knives and a huge horn containing several pounds of powder.

Assuring himself that the chambers of the revolvers were in working order, he began to make his way toward the distant camp.

His progress was necessarily slow, and more than an hour elapsed before he reached it.

Prostrate, face downward upon the ground, he crawled toward the nearest tent.

The encampment was made in the form of a semi-circle running down to the shore of a small lake.

Behind it for several hundred yards was a dense growth of chaparral and underbrush that gradually merged into the forest.

As the young man noticed this an idea entered his brain, that caused a look of malignant satisfaction to overspread his face.

With a skill that would have done no discredit to the most experienced scout, he crawled his body noiselessly along the ground, until he had reached the first tent of the semi-circle, beginning at the water's edge.

With his bowie knife he noiselessly cut away the birch bark of which the lodge was composed.

and through the opening thus made peered into the interior.

A dozen or more Indians lay on the ground asleep, but there was no sign of the presence of the maiden he was risking his life to rescue, and again the malignant look came upon his face as he thought of the revenge he contemplated.

Unslinging the powder horn, he sprinkled a thin trail of the powder along the ground, beginning beside the small heap of fragments he had cut from the covering of the lodge.

Then, still lying face downward upon the ground, he made his way toward the next wigwam, leaving behind him as he passed the thin trail of powder.

To the next he went in the same manner, and to the next, and next, until more than two dozen had been investigated, and still there was no trace of the girl he was seeking.

But now one remained, and with the hope he had cherished gradually dying out of his breast, he proceeded to cut through its covering as he had done the others.

In his impatience to know at once the best or worst, he did not take time, as he had done before, to cut the opening inch by inch, but with two rapid slashes of his knife tore away a piece of the bark large enough to admit his whole body.

As he did so the noise aroused the sole occupant of the wigwam, an Indian whose extra adornments upon his dress showed him to be a chief, and who, with a guttural ejaculation of mingled anger and surprise, sprang toward him.

The hatchet he had snatched from his belt was upraised threateningly, and in an instant Edward Weston realized his position.

It was no time for hesitation, and grasping his bowie knife firmly he raised himself upon his elbow, and hurled it with all his strength at the advancing savage.

The aim was true, and without so much as a single shriek of pain, the Indian fell dead upon the ground.

Hardly had this happened than the blanket over the doorway was thrown aside, and another savage entered.

For a moment he stood bewildered, and then snatching the tomahawk from his belt, a wild cry on his lips, he sprang toward the young man, the weapon upraised for the deadly blow.

As the blanket had been raised, he had seen, passing around one of the capes in the distance, a party of men, and among them he also fancied he saw the flutter of women's dresses.

Could it be possible that Clara had escaped and was with them?

The knowledge of the fugitive party and the question flashed through his mind with the electric quickness of thought, but there was no time to ponder over an answer.

He threw his other bowie knife, with the same result as the first one.

With one wild death-cry the savage fell backward, and the young man, knowing that in an instant the whole camp would be upon him, felt that there was no time to be lost if he would make his escape.

At first there was his revenge.

Emptying the remaining contents of his pow-

der-horn upon the ground, he drew one of the revolvers from his belt and fired.

In an instant it ignited the dry bark of which the wigwam was built, and then a thin streak of fire like a serpent ran on to the next, until before a minute had elapsed the whole encampment was in a blaze.

A wild, ringing laugh of triumph upon his lips, Edward Weston ran at the top of his speed toward where his horse was picketed, but already the whole of the savages, with fierce cries of rage, were after him.

Suddenly a cry of alarm, breaking simultaneously from his pursuers, caused him to check his pace, and looking around, saw in an instant the cause of their fear.

The flames of the blazing wigwams had spread into the chaparral, and the whole forest would soon be on fire.

Too well the young man realized now what he had done.

It was now a race between the fire and himself which should first reach the spot where he had left his horse, but at last he did so in safety, and sprang into the saddle.

The animal, as if comprehending the danger, exerted his utmost speed, and for a little while it seemed as if he would distance the fire.

After an hour or so, however, he began to grow exhausted, and the rider's utmost endeavors could not urge him on.

Turning in his saddle, Edward Weston looked around, and as he did so a feeling of the utmost despair came over him.

The horse's steps were growing slower and slower, and the fire was not more than two hundred yards away.

The heat was growing unbearable. Mechanically he strove to urge on his horse's stumbling footsteps; a wild delirium seemed to take possession of his senses, and then all was blank.

When he again recovered consciousness he was lying upon a blanket stretched beneath the shadow of a tree.

Gazing about him in a bewildered way, his glance was suddenly riveted by an anxious face that was bending over him.

"Am I awake?" he gasped. "Has it all been a dream, Clara?"

He had been correct in his surmise that Clara was one of the fugitives he had seen passing behind the shelter of the cape at the moment the savage had raised the hatchet to deal his death-blow. With her companions she had managed to escape from the Indian camp, and almost immediately had fallen in with a company of United States troops, who at once took them under their protection, and also riding away from the fire, had, luckily for Edward Weston, come upon him at the very moment his horse had fallen, and thrown him stunned to the ground.

Riding across the track of the fire, it had passed them by unharmed; but of the unmounted savages, not one of them remained alive to tell the tale of their companions' doom.

The fate of Clara Morgan's parents had been terribly avenged, and the girl was now left quite alone in the world; two weeks later the interrupted ceremony took place, and she became the wife of Edward Weston.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, JULY 6, 1921.

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

OSTRICH SKIN SHOES.

We have recently had many odd leathers such as shark skin, porpoise, etc., and now the ostrich comes forward to help leather shortage. Shoes made of leather from ostrich skins will outlast leather. The ostrich always had a reputation of being a touchy old bird.

SPILLED HOME BREW ON POLICE.

While police officers were standing in the doorway of a house in Wichita, Kan., in the act of serving a search warrant on the owner they were drenched with home brew dripping from the ceiling of the floor above. It developed that the owners of the liquor in their hurry to get from the second story window, accidentally tripped over a jar containing several gallons of the liquid. Several arrests were made and a large amount of liquor confiscated.

SEARCHLIGHTS FOR BAIT FOR AVALON FLYING FISH.

This fish story comes from Avalon, on Catalina Island, twenty-five miles out in the Pacific from Los Angeles.

Catalina Island is noted for several things. It is a good place for goat hunting; it boasts the westernmost wireless telephone station in the United States, and it is the rendezvous for flying fish. Millions of them make their home in Avalon Bay.

The Catalina Excursion Company has equipped one of its boats with a giant searchlight and every night it scouts about Avalon Bay rousing thousands of flying fish out of their native haunts, much to the edification of the passengers. The flying fish craze has grown to such proportions that instead of one light the boat now boasts six, enabling it to arouse school after school of the peculiar creatures.

Where the voyagers formerly were content to recount in thousands the number of flying fish they had seen, it is no uncommon thing now to hear them talk about millions, meanwhile producing the remains of unfortunate specimens which hurled themselves at the boat's lights, only to fall on its decks.

SMOKER KEEPS PIPE BURNING 2 HOURS 5 MINUTES.

Fifty tobacco lovers sat in a row at the Tobacco Fair in the Horticultural Hall, Westminster, London. Each was bent on making his pipeful of tobacco last longest, for waiting for him who was still smoking when the pipes of the others were out was a new bicycle. To be second in this race of slowness was not to be an empty honor. Nine gallons of ale was the second prize.

Some of the competitors were white-haired men of the chimney corner, who had known and loved many a long "churchwarden." One was a Chelsea pensioner who smoked grimly on when a good many of his neighbors had retired from the contest.

Not a word was spoken by the competitors, but round about them their friends stood and jocundly urged them to "stick to it."

Forty seconds were allowed to light up and no relighting was permitted.

R. Woodcock of Waithamsbow won the contest. He smoked for 2 hours 5 minutes, seven minutes under the record time. He used a clay pipe and kept his tobacco together with a needle. The second prize winner was A. Holland, of Blackfriars, whose time was 1 hour 28 minutes.

The record of 2 hours 12 minutes was established at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, in 1907.

LAUGHS

"Vy don't yer speak ter yer svell friendt at der odder end of der car?" "Shush! She ain't paid her fare yet."

Wigwag—What do you find the greatest drawback to a literary career? Scribbler—Return postage.

She—Why do you want me to take the morning glory as my floral emblem? He—Because the morning glory knows when to shut up.

"We're getting on pretty well, now that we're carrying on the business together, aren't we, father?" "Oh, pretty well, my son. I do the business and you do the carrying on."

Edith came running in one day in great distress. "Oh, mother," she cried, "Mary has taken the nest egg out of the old hen's nest, and now how can she ever make another without any pattern to go by?"

"Indians, you know," said the widely-read man, "are very stoical. They're never known to laugh." "Oh, I don't know," replied the flippan person. "The poet Longfellow made Minnehaha."

"How beautiful it is to see the sign of Spring everywhere," remarked the landlady at the breakfast table. "I wish I could discover some evidence of it in my mattress," muttered the hall-room lodger.

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

· SUEZ CANAL TO BE TUNNELED.

The great military base at Kantara, from which the British built a military railway through the desert to Palestine, is being dismantled. The line, of course, is permanent. During the war the Suez Canal was crossed by a large swing bridge, which is now to be dismantled. Connection between the Egyptian railways and the new line to Palestine will be maintained by means of a tunnel which will be built below the Suez Canal.

9,311 BISON IN THE WORLD.

The total number of pure-blood bison throughout the world is now only 9,311, of which one-third are to be found in the United States, according to a summary of the thirteenth census of living American bison as of Jan. 31, just made public by the American Bison Society. Of this number there are in the United States 3,427 captive and 100 wild bison. In Canada there are 4,916 captive and 800 wild; in North America, 900 wild, making a total of 9,243. In South America and foreign countries there are 68 bison in captivity, making a total of 9,311. In 1920 1,700 calves were born.

"BISMARCK" TO BE NAMED "MAJESTIC."

The German liner "Bismarck," sister ship to the "Vaterland," now the "Laviathan," is nearing completion at the yards of the Blohm & Voss Shipping Company at Hamburg. This ship, with a length of 950 feet and a beam of 100 feet, will have a gross tonnage of about 56,000. The builders claim that she will be a better boat than the "Vaterland," the experience gained in that ship being embodied in her. The "Bismarck" was handed over to the Allies under the terms of the Treaty, and has been sold to the White Star Line, who will rename her "Majestic," when she hoists the company's flag and takes her place in the service from New York to Europe.

DO NOT EAT RATTLES.

One of Yosemite National Park's most interesting snakes is the king snake. Dr. Bryant, who will be one of the nature guides this season, declares that its beautiful bandings of white, black and red remind him of the beadwork of the Mojave Indians of Arizona. The king snake was a great favorite of forty-niner gold seekers.

Finding it throughout the country infested by rattlesnakes, snake stories, with the ready imagination of that time, were soon told of its hunts for big rattlers. These yarns finally crystallized into the well-known mountain superstition.

The king snake does eat other snakes, but it is surely nature faking to say that it deliberately starts out on a hunt for the rattlesnake, says Dr. Bryant.

RIFLEMEN TO GUARD FISH.

One of the most novel jobs in the United States is held down by a man in Oregon. The State Legislature has just commissioned him official sealion hunter and he is to work in co-operation with the State Fish Commission to rid the coast

of Oregon of the sealion menace which destroys more fish than all the famed canneries of the district combined can pack. For bounties the hunter has brought in over 10,000 sea lions. Thousands of tons of salmon are destroyed annually by the peculiar land and water beast against whom the hunter wages merciless warfare. The secretary of the State Fish Commission states that during the 157 days which constitute the open season, and during which the canneries are allowed to operate, sea lions along the coast consume 41,500,000 pounds of salmon.

DROPS DEAD MAKING HIS SECOND HOME RUN.

A home run the other day cost the life of Louis Fetyk, twenty-two, a salesman, of No. 973 Intervale Avenue, Bronx, at Van Cortlandt Park Parade Grounds, New York.

With the score tied, 3 all, and a man on base, he smashed a homer and sped around the bases, while 200 spectators of a "pick-up" team game cheered. Among them was his brother Rudolph, a player.

Hardly had he touched the plate when Fetyk dropped dead. Patrolman Russell of the Kingsbridge Station called Dr. Collins of Fordham Hospital. The doctor said death was due to heart failure.

The margin of victory—the game was stopped—was due to Fetyk. In the first inning he had made another home run. The fatal one came in the seventh inning.

Medical Examiner Regelman had the body removed to the Morgue for an autopsy.

WHY IS GOLD CALLED PRECIOUS?

Gold is called one of the precious metals because of its beautiful color, its luster, and the fact that it does not rust or tarnish when exposed to the air. It is the most ductile (can be stretched out into the thinnest wire), and is also the most malleable (can be hammered out into the thinnest sheet). It can be hammered into leaves so thin that light will pass through them. Pure gold is so soft that it cannot be used in that form in making gold coins or in making jewelry. Other substances, generally copper, are added to it to make the gold coins and jewelry hard. Sometimes silver is also added to the gold with copper. The gold coins of the United States are made of nine parts of gold to one of copper. The coins of France are the same, while the coins of England are made of 11 parts of gold to one of copper. The gold used for jewelry and watch cases varies from eight or nine to 18 carats fine.

Another reason why gold is called a precious metal is that it is very difficult to dissolve it. None of the acids alone will dissolve gold, and only two of them when mixed together will do so. These are nitric acid and hydrochloric acid. When these two acids are mixed and gold put into the mixture the gold will disappear—*Book of Wonders*.

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

CHLOROFORMS HIMSELF TRYING TO KILL HIS CAT.

Frank Souders, a Pennsylvania Railroad engineer, lost his life the other day attempting to chloroform an aged cat at his home in Paoli, Pa., while his family was away.

The cat screeched and struggled as he tried to hold a chloroform rag to its nose. Souders fell unconscious and died from the fumes. The cat ran away.

WAR SOUVENIR IN SCALP.

George R. Clark, traffic policeman, Wichita, Kan., has a new souvenir of the war which wasn't brought overseas in a truck or kit-bag. It is a piece of shrapnel the size of a small bullet which recently was removed by a surgeon from Clark's scalp. The piece of metal found a home in Clark's anatomy two years ago during the Argonne battle. He suffered a number of other wounds at the time.

MOTHER RABBIT KILLS SNAKE.

That even the timid rabbit will fight in defense of its young was proved by M. E. Dalby of Elk Prairie Township, Ill., who saw a mother rabbit in a life or death conflict with a black snake three feet long. The snake had attacked the nest of young rabbits nearby and the mother had come to their rescue. Dalby went after a club to help the rabbit, but when he returned she had torn the snake in pieces with her claws and sharp teeth.

LANDS BIG CATFISH.

Henry Hensley, a young farmer living on the Northfork River, east of Mountain Home, Mo., brought a thirty-eight pound blue catfish into town recently that cost him a real fight to land. Hensley had several lines set, and went to examine them in his boat the other morning.

One had a fish on and he started to raise it, having taken the pole in his hand. The fish made a straightaway run, and Hensley, afraid he would break loose, jumped into the water after him.

Swimming and wading, he fought him for 300

yards down the stream, and finally wore him out and landed him. This makes the third big catfish he has caught within the last week. The others weighed seventeen and twenty-five pounds, respectively.

"RED SCHOOLHOUSE" SAILS THE SEVEN SEAS.

Apprentices on the Spanish steamship Artagan Mendi are required to attend a floating school while sailing the seven seas. This ship which came into Galveston a few days ago and took a cargo of wheat for a foreign port, is fitted up with a regular schoolroom where the apprentices receive daily instruction from a professor who devotes all of his time to the schoolroom duties. The vessel is operated by the Spanish Government and carries seventeen apprentices, who are being trained to become steamship officers. These boys, most of whom appear to be about 16 or 17 years old, are taught both the theory and practice of the things that a model steamship officer should know.

A large cabin amidships has been fitted up as a perfect schoolroom for the boys and their instructor. It is near the quarters in which the apprentices live and to their refectory. Large desks of the kind typical of the little red schoolhouses of the United States, but wrought richly in fine wood, are installed, and each apprentice has all the textbooks and materials and instruments he needs for his work. On one bulkhead of the cabin is affixed the time honored blackboard, where intricate problems may be visualized through the medium of common chalk. The place is light and airy and seems more suitable for a schoolhouse than the average building used for that purpose.

The apprentices combine actual operation of the vessel with the theory that is taught in the schoolroom. The day is so divided that they may gain, in each twenty-four hours, a measure of practical work together with textbook information. What they learn, therefore, they know thoroughly and are able to apply practically.

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HARRY E. WOLFF, 166 West Twenty-third St., New York City

The congregation of the Clayton Baptist Church at Raleigh, N. C., were on the verge of discharging their organist for his inability to create anything but weird groaning from the organ, when they decided to investigate first. From one of the pipes they drew a nine-pound possum. So the organist was reinstated and the possum was made into a stew.

FATE OF A
FAMOUS
STONE.

It is a strange story, that of the Branicki sapphire, which M. Lacomblez, examining magistrate, is at present investigating. This precious stone, known as "The King of Sapphires," belonged to the Branicki family; it was bought at Frankfort in 1840, weighed 291 carats, is said to have been worth several million francs, and was taken from the hip pocket of Count Xavier Branicki at Warsaw in July, 1918, during the German occupation.

The Count found himself in Paris recently, and knowing that there is an important market for precious stones in the city, he thought he would ask the police to make inquiries about his sapphire. The police inspectors found in the possession of a dealer in precious stones • not the sapphire, but portions of it.

He was aware that the stone had figured in the exhibition in Vienna in 1867, and in the Paris exhibition in 1878, and realizing that it would be difficult to get rid of it he had it cut into fragments, some of which were utilized in rings and necklaces. Of the 291 carats only 136 carats remain.

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On legal affidavit, John Hard Brittain, business man, certified to this: "My head at the top and back was absolutely bald. The scalp was shiny. An expert said that he thought the hair roots were extinct, and there was no hope of my ever having a new hair growth. Yet now, at an age over 66, I have a luxuriant growth of soft, strong, lustrous hair! No trace of baldness. The pictures shown here are from my photographs." Mr. Brittain certified further:

INDIAN'S SECRET OF HAIR GROWTH



Photo when bald.

"At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian 'medicine man' who had an elixir that he asserted would grow my hair. Although I had but little faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a healthy growth, and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

That I was astonished and happy is expressing my state of mind mildly. Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade.

I negotiated for and came into possession of the principle for preparing this mysterious elixir, now called Kotalko, and later had the recipe put into practical form by a chemist.

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After hair growth

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G. W. Mitchell reports: "I had spots completely bald, over which hair is now growing since I used Kotalko."

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as the palm of my hand for about 15 years. Since using

Kotalko, hair is growing all over the place that was bald." Many more splendid, convincing reports from satisfied users.



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REFITTING
BIG LINER TO
COST \$1,000,000.

Details of the reconditioning of the transatlantic liner George Washington, which is the largest American merchant vessel ever to fly the American flag, were announced recently by the Todd Shipyards Corporation, which has received the contract from the United States Mail Steamship Company. The cost will exceed \$1,000,000 and the terms provide for the completion of the work by August.

During the peace negotiations the George Washington was used by President Wilson on his two visits to Europe. It was also the choice of King Albert and Queen Elizabeth of Belgium when they came to the United States. The steamer was used as a transport during the war and carried many thousands of troops. The George Washington was one of the North German Lloyd vessels seized by this Government.

When refitted the steamer will have accommodations for 3,000 passengers. The swimming pool is to be the largest ever installed on a steamship. The installation of billiard tables has been made possible as the result of an anti-rolling device.

**FISH OR
ANIMAL.**

"When is a fish not a fish?" is the question uppermost in the mind of Forest Taylor of No. 30' North Broadway, Oklahoma City, Okla., these days.

It being an ideal fishing day, Taylor decided to spend it imitating Izaak Walton in beguiling the fish from their retreats. Upon arriving at a pond north of town, he cast his seine, intent upon capturing a few minnows for bait. When he drew it from shallow depths, he beheld a sight that made him think corn whisky had got into his system by absent treatment.

He drew a pair of nameless, unknown species of water creatures with heads like that of a dog-fish, skin like that of a pickerel and a body like that of a lizard. Just back of the head there is a pair of balls similar to those of Japanese gold-fish, which enables the creature to breathe under water. Its fish-like head can be compared, as to the setting of eyes and form of nostrils, to that of a Gila monster.

Samuel B. Lippincott, teacher of biology in Oklahoma City High School, is intending to take the species to the biology laboratory for a definite research, in the endeavor to find what status the animal—or fish—has.

"END YOUR RHEUMATISM"

**Like I Did Mine" — Says
Pastor Reed; Wife
Also Rid of Neuritis**

**Suffered Tortures For Years—Now
Telling Good News To Others**



**"Don't Believe That Old Humbug About
'Uric Acid' Being the Cause of Rheu-
matism — It's Not So!"**

Emphatically asserting that thousands of unfortunate sufferers have been led into taking wrong treatments under the old and false belief that "Uric Acid" causes rheumatism, Pastor H. W. Reed says:

"As do some of our highest medical authorities, I now know that 'Uric Acid' never did and never will cause rheumatism! But it took me many years to find out this truth. I learned how to get rid of my rheumatism and recover my health and strength, through reading 'The Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism,' a work written by an authority who has scientifically studied the cause and treatment of rheumatism for over twenty years. It was indeed a veritable revelation!

"I had suffered agony for years from rheumatism and associated disorders, and Mrs. Reed was tortured with the demon neuritis almost beyond endurance. We had read and talked so much about 'Uric Acid' that our minds seemed poisoned. But the 'Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism' made it all clear to us and now we are both free from the suffering and misery we endured so many years. I believe I was the hardest man in the world to convert! For me to discard the old 'Uric Acid' theory, and what I now know to be absolutely false, for the new, scientific understanding of the causes and cure of rheumatism, was like asking me to change my religious beliefs! But I did change, and it was a fortunate day for me and mine when I did so."

NOTE: "The Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism" referred to above by Pastor Reed lays bare facts about rheumatism and its associated disorders overlooked by doctors and scientists for centuries past. It is a work that should be in the hands of every man or woman who has the slightest symptoms of rheumatism, neuritis, lumbago or gout. Any one who sends name and address to H. P. Clearwater, 534 F Street, Hallowell, Maine, will receive it by mail, postage paid absolutely free. Send now, lest you forget the address! If not a sufferer, cut out the explanation and hand it to some afflicted friend.



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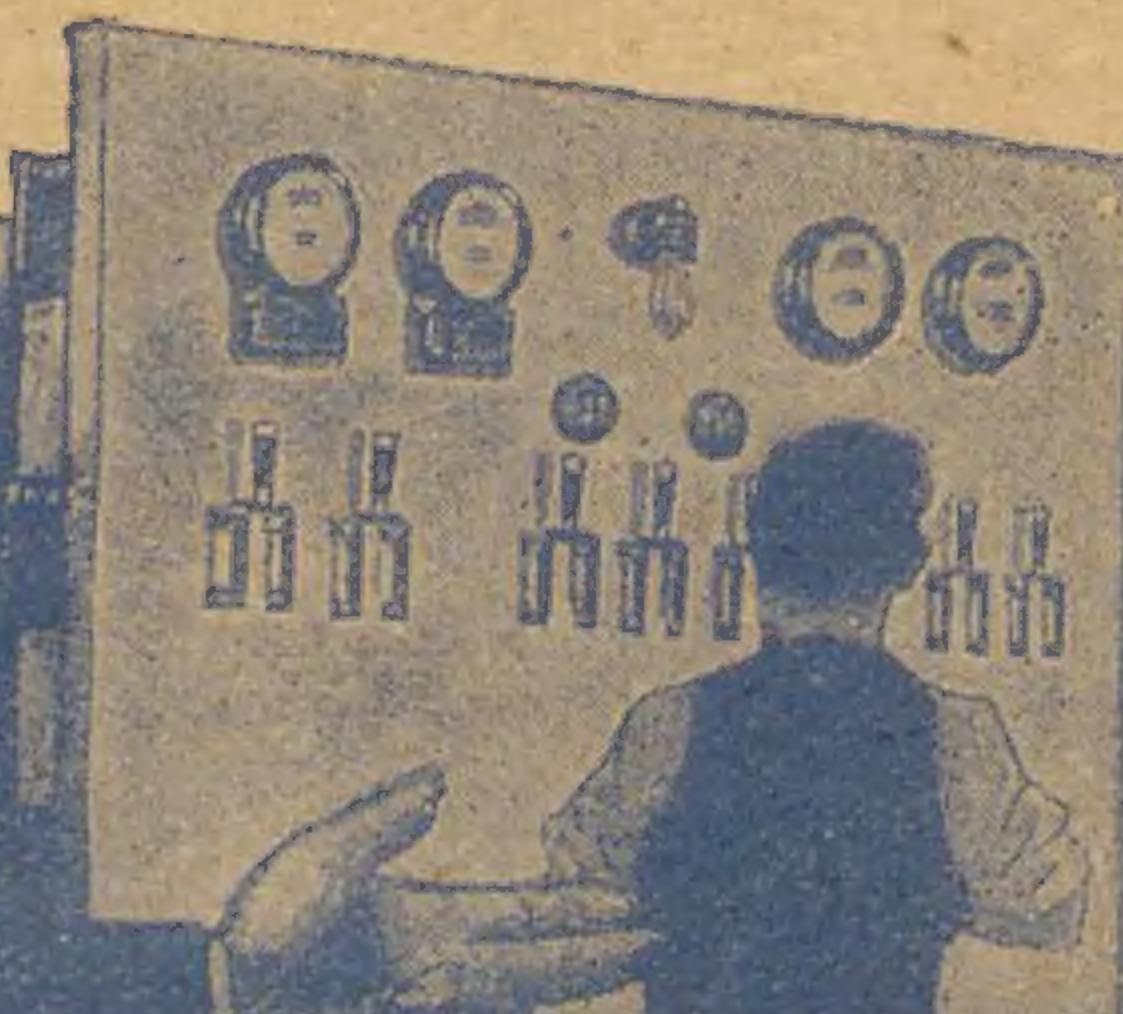
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